

APR 9  
JAMES H. McK

No. 648. 267.

*Brief of Hackett & Blair for*

SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES.

*Filed* OCTOBER TERM, 1897. *April 9, 1898.*  
NO. *648.*

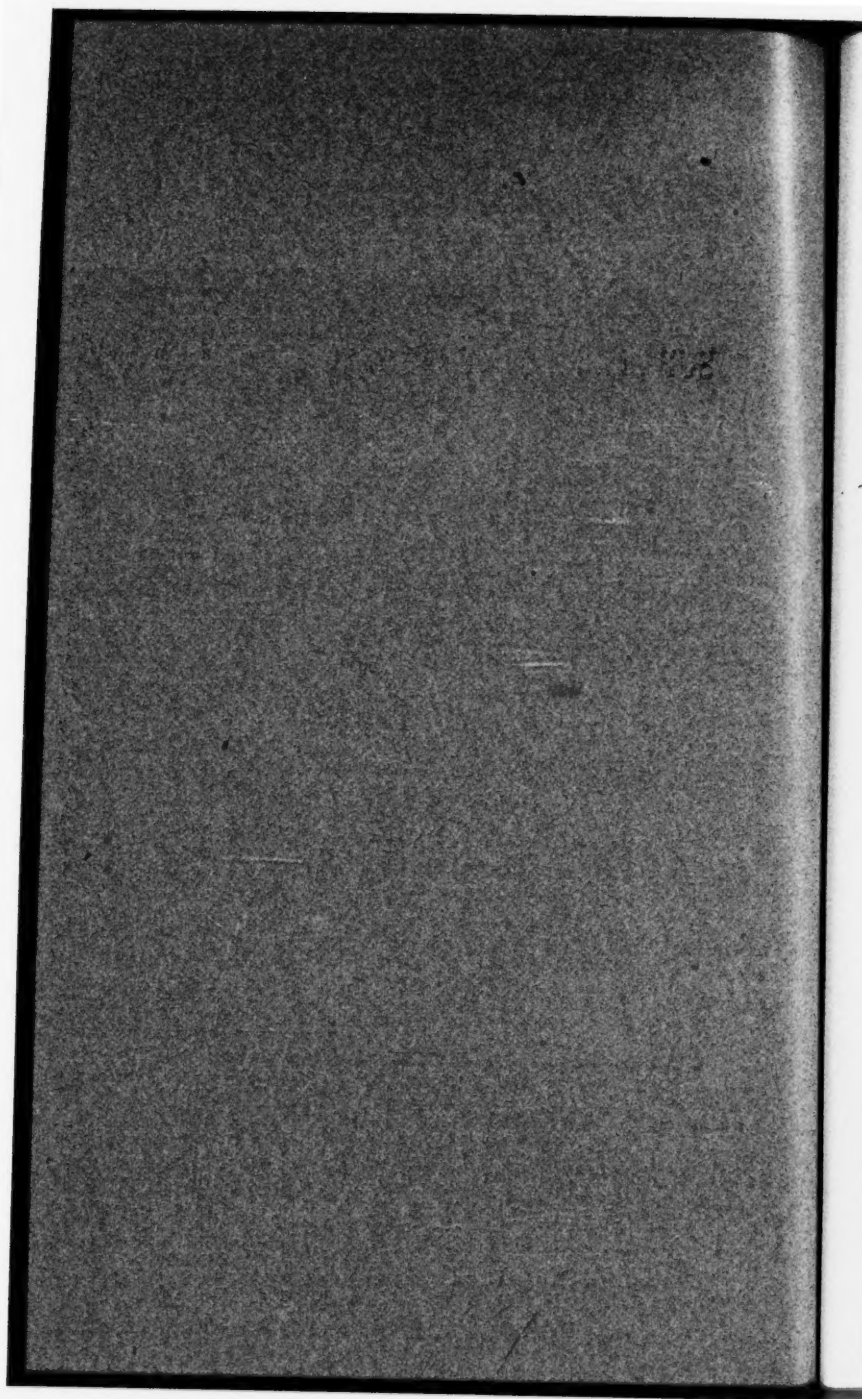
ALBERT WADE, *Petitioner,*

VERSUS

TRAVIS COUNTY (Texas), *Respondent.*

BRIEF IN SUPPORT OF THE APPLICATION FOR A WRIT OF  
CERTIORARI TO THE UNITED STATES CIRCUIT COURT  
OF APPEALS FOR THE FIFTH CIRCUIT.

FRANK W. HACKETT,  
GEO. F. PENDEXTER,  
T. W. GREGORY,  
JOSEPH PAXTON BLAIR,  
*Attorneys for Petitioner.*



# Supreme Court of the United States.

OCTOBER TERM, 1897.

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ALBERT WADE, <i>Petitioner,</i>	} No. 618.
<i>vs.</i>	
TRAVIS COUNTY (TEXAS), <i>Respondent.</i>	

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## SUPPLEMENTARY BRIEF FOR PETITIONER.

Upon further consideration it has seemed advisable to submit one suggestion by way of argument upon the point that the facts of this case present an urgent reason for the exercise by the court of its power to grant the writ prayed for in furtherance of justice.

While this power is unlimited, the court very properly requires of itself a great degree of care in exercising it, proceeding slowly so as not unduly to extend the scope of practice under this head, and yet so as to afford relief in a thoroughly deserving case.

The guarded language of the opinion upon the latest occasion where the subject has come under review, emphasizes the necessity of adhering to the position that the questions involved shall be "questions of gravity and importance."

After making it plain that the purpose of Congress in vesting in this court so comprehensive a power is to afford a remedy to prevent injustice, the court continues :

"It is a power which will be sparingly exercised, and only when the circumstances of the case satisfy us that the importance of the question involved, the necessity of avoiding conflicts between two or more courts of appeal, or between courts of appeal and courts of a state, or some matter affecting the interest of this nation in its internal or external relations demands such exercise." *Per* BREWER, J., *Forsyth v. Hammond*, 166 U. S., 514.

We respectfully submit that our petition meets the requirements thus stated.

As to the importance of the question involved, it is clear that the real question is, shall relief be denied when it appears from the record that the circuit court of appeals would have reversed its finding had it only retained jurisdiction over the cause.

By this we mean not that the requirement is that *counsel shall think* that the court of appeals would have reversed its finding, but that it appears to this court certain that such, if it retained control, would be the action of the court below.

Reversal, we confidently submit, could be counted on for reasons already advanced in our brief. Obviously the court of appeals supposed that it was following a judicial interpretation already laid down by the supreme court of Texas, of a clause of the constitution of that state.

It appears that subsequently to the announcement of the decision in the federal court, the supreme court of Texas determined the precise question, and that too without reversing a previous decision. The true construction of the meaning of the constitution of Texas has not been reached by pronouncing a former decision of the highest court of that state to have been incorrect. The circuit court of appeals conceived itself bound by a decision of the supreme court of the state of Texas in the construction of the clause in question of the constitution. It plainly appears, however, that as to this the court fell into error. It was not such an



error as results from independent reasoning on the part of the court. It is rather assimilated to an error of fact, in that the federal tribunal had taken as the expression of the highest court of the state a legal conclusion which really did not exist. It is apparent, therefore, that had a motion for rehearing been filed, and continued into the next term, so that the court would have retained jurisdiction of the subject-matter, it would undoubtedly have corrected the error into which it had unwittingly fallen. This plain act of justice the court below cannot now accomplish, however much it may desire to do so.

Here are circumstances, therefore, which afford precisely the occasion for relief that was contemplated by Congress. This case, we believe, presents for the first time that peculiar result, which can but infrequently occur, where the circuit court of appeals is helpless to correct its own record, a record which it would be only too willing to correct, if it had the power. We say therefore with confidence that the question of practice involved is of the highest importance, and that its decision will control a class of cases where the application for relief rests upon grounds that commend themselves as highly meritorious.

FRANK W. HACKETT,  
GEO. F. PENDENTER,  
T. W. GREGORY,  
JOSEPH PAXTON BLAIR,  
*For Petitioner.*

\* \* The opinion of the Supreme Court of Texas (BROWN, J.,) in *County of Mitchel v. City National Bank of Paducah, Kentucky*, printed in our brief pp. 14-43, is reported in 43 Southwestern Reporter, pp. 880-890. •

NOTICE OF FILING PETITION.

SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES.

OCTOBER TERM, 1897.

ALBERT WADE, *Petitioner*,  
v.  
TRAVIS COUNTY, TEXAS. } No. 618.

March 25, 1898.

Take notice that the petitioner, Albert Wade, has this day filed his petition in the Supreme Court of the United States for a writ of certiorari to the United States Court of Appeals, Fifth Circuit, having duly complied with the rules of court in that regard. The petitioner will call up his said petition on Monday, April 11th, 1898, and submit the same with brief in support thereof.

ALBERT WADE.

*By his Attorneys:*

J. P. BLAIR,  
FRANK W. HACKETT.

To George Calhoun,

*County Att'y, Travis Co., Tex.*

Franz Fisct and Clarence H. Miller,

*Att'ys for Travis Co., Tex.*

Service of the foregoing notice, time, &c., are hereby waived, and we take cognizance of the contents of said notice hereby, this April 1, 1898.

[Signed] GEORGE CALHOUN,

*County Att'y Travis Co.*

FRANZ FISCT and C. H. MILLER,

*Att'ys for Travis Co.*

SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES.

OCTOBER TERM, 1897.

No. ———.

ALBERT WADE, *Petitioner*,

*versus*

TRAVIS COUNTY (TEXAS), *Respondent*.

---

BRIEF IN SUPPORT OF THE APPLICATION FOR A WRIT OF  
CERTIORARI TO THE UNITED STATES CIRCUIT COURT  
OF APPEALS FOR THE FIFTH CIRCUIT.

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The grounds upon which petitioner's application for a *certiorari* in this case is based are so simple and of such narrow compass that argument is hardly necessary either to explain or to support them. We shall, however, supplement the statement of the case in the petition by a brief presentation of the following points: 1. The application is not barred by lapse of time, and the delay in making it is not unreasonable under the peculiar facts of the case. 2. The construction of the Constitution and statutes of the State of Texas, announced by the Circuit Court of Appeals in this case, is directly opposed to the construction of same constitutional and statutory law by the Supreme Court of Texas. 3. The Supreme Court of Texas was right, and the Circuit Court of Appeals was wrong, in the construction placed by them respectively on the Constitution and statutes in question.

## I.

*This application is not barred by lapse of time, and the delay in making it was not unreasonable under the peculiar circumstances of this case.*

The decision of the Court of Appeals in this case was rendered on June 16, 1897, at the November, 1896, term of that Court, which expired on June 25, 1897. The Court, with a quorum of judges, did not convene again until January 3, 1898. By rule No. 29 of that Court no application for a rehearing will be entertained unless made before the expiration of the term at which the decision concerned was rendered. The decision of the Supreme Court of Texas, which afforded the means of establishing the error of the Court of Appeals, was not rendered until January 10, 1898. A delay of less than three months after the decision of the State Supreme Court in presenting this application is certainly not unreasonable. We did not, before that decision, have sufficient grounds either for an application to the Court of Appeals for a rehearing or to this Court for a *certiorari*. We had nothing new to present to the Court of Appeals. On the argument we urged the very question afterward decided by the Supreme Court of Texas in the Mitchel county case, and filed a copy of the decision in that case of the Civil Court of Appeals, which had been recently rendered; but, presumably because that was a decision of an inferior State Court, it had no weight, and was not even mentioned by the Circuit Court of Appeals in its opinion. When the Supreme Court of the State of Texas made its authoritative construction of the State Constitution and statutes upon which the decision of our case depends, it was too late, under the rules, to apply to the Circuit Court of Appeals for a rehearing, and the only source of relief left open was in this Court through the writ of *certiorari*.

It is settled by the case of *The Conqueror*, 166 U. S.

110, that the only absolute limitation of time in respect to an application of this kind is twelve months from the date of the judgment complained of, and we are within that limit.

## II.

*The construction of the Constitution and statutes of the State of Texas, announced by the Circuit Court of Appeals in this case, is directly opposed to the construction of the same constitutional and statutory law by the Supreme Court of Texas.*

The correctness of this proposition will at once appear from a simple reading of the two decisions. We shall now briefly compare the facts and the conclusions of law in the two cases.

In the Mitchel county case one of the bond issues, the validity of which was at issue, was one of bonds issued under the authority of the Commissioner's Court of Mitchel county in payment for a county bridge. The authority for the action of the county officials was an act entitled "An act to authorize counties to issue bonds for bridge purposes and to levy a tax to pay the same," being Chapter 18 of the general laws of 1884. Sections 1 and 2 of this act are as follows:

"SECTION 1. *Be it enacted by the Legislature of the State of Texas*, That the County Commissioners' Courts of the several counties of this State are hereby authorized and empowered to issue bonds of said county, with interest coupons attached, for such amounts as may be necessary for the purpose of buying or constructing bridges for public uses within such county, said bonds to run not exceeding twenty years and bear interest at any rate not to exceed eight per cent. per annum.

"SEC. 2. The Commissioner's Court shall levy an annual *ad valorem* tax not to exceed fifteen cents on the one hundred dollars valuation, sufficient to pay the interest thereon, and create a sinking fund for the redemption of said bonds. The sinking fund herein provided for

shall not be less than four per cent. on the full sum for which the bonds are issued."

This act, as stated by the Supreme Court in its decision, was enacted in pursuance of Sec. 2 of Art. 11 of the Constitution of Texas, which provides: "The construction of jails, court houses and bridges, and the establishment of county poor houses and farms, and the laying out, construction and repairing of county roads, shall be provided for by general laws."

In the present case the bonds in question were issued, in payment for a county bridge, under the authority of the County Commissioners' Court of Travis county, whose power to act was derived from an act entitled "An act to authorize counties to buy, construct, or contract for the use of bridges, and to issue bonds and levy taxes to pay for the same, and to repeal all laws in conflict herewith," being chapter 141 of the general laws of 1887. Sections 1 and 2 of this act are identical with the corresponding sections of the act of 1884, and read as follows:

"SECTION 1. *Be it enacted by the Legislature of the State of Texas*, That the County Commissioners' Courts of the several counties of this State are hereby authorized and empowered to issue bonds of said county, with interest coupons attached, for such amounts as may be necessary for the purpose of buying or constructing bridges for public uses within such county, said bonds to run not exceeding twenty years, and bear interest at any rate not to exceed 8 per cent. per annum.

"SEC. 2. The Commissioner's Court shall levy an annual *ad valorem* tax, not to exceed fifteen cents on the one hundred dollars valuation, sufficient to pay the interest thereon, and create a sinking fund for the redemption of said bonds. The sinking fund herein provided for shall not be less than 4 per cent. on the full sum for which the bonds are issued."

This act, like the act of 1884, which it superseded, was passed in compliance with the requirements of Sec. 2 of Art. 11 of the Constitution, quoted above.



It appears from the decision of the Court in the Mitchell county case that the Commissioners' Court, at the time the bonds in question were issued or the contract calling for them was made, did not make any provision for levying and collecting a sufficient tax to pay the interest thereof and to provide a sinking fund of at least 2 per cent. It appears from the pleadings and the decision of the Court in the present case that the Commissioners' Court likewise failed to make provision for levying and collecting a sufficient tax, etc., at the time the contract was made and the issue of the bonds ordered. And in both cases the defense was that the omission of the Commissioners' Court to make such provision operated the nullity of the bond issues, because in violation of the mandate contained in Sec. 7 of Art. 11 of the State Constitution.

In neither case was the fact disputed, that, considering the taxable values of the county in the year in which the bonds in question were issued, the exercise of the taxing power within the constitutional limit would be sufficient to pay the interest accruing on the bonds and to provide the sinking fund required by the Constitution and the statute under which they were issued.

Coming to the conclusions of law announced by the two courts, we find that the Circuit Court of Appeals considered that the question of whether the requirements of Sec. 7 of Art. 11 of the State Constitution applied to all cities and counties, whether bordering on the gulf coast or not, had been settled, and that they applied to all municipal corporations wherever situated; but that the Supreme Court of Texas declared that whether that section applied to such bonds as were then in suit was an open question, the decision of which was not necessary in the case before the Court. Section 7 of Art. 11 is as follows: "All counties and cities bordering on the coast of the Gulf of Mexico are hereby authorized upon a vote of two-thirds of the taxpayers therein (to be ascertained as may be pro-

vided by law) to levy and collect such tax for construction of sea walls, breakwaters, or sanitary purposes as may be authorized by law, and may create a debt for such works and issue bonds in evidence thereof. But no debt for any purpose shall ever be incurred in any manner by any city or county, unless provision is made at the time of creating the same for levying and collecting a sufficient tax to pay the interest thereon and provide at least two per cent. as a sinking fund; and the condemnation of the right-of-way for the erection of such works shall be fully provided for."

The Supreme Court of Texas assumed, for the purposes of the Mitchel county case, that the above quoted article was applicable to the indebtedness then in question, and we shall make a like assumption in the argument of this case. Applying Sec. 7, Art. 11, to petitioner's case, the Circuit Court of Appeals held that it was essential to the validity of the bridge contract and of the bonds sued on that the County Commissioners' Court, when it made the contracts and authorized the issuance of the bonds, should have itself at that time expressly provided for the levy and collection of a sufficient tax to pay the interest thereon and to provide a sinking fund of at least two per cent., and that, as the petition of plaintiff in the court below failed to show that the County Commissioners did make such special contemporaneous provision for a sufficient tax, etc., no cause of action had been stated and the general demurrer must be sustained. The Court passed over, *sub silentio*, the effect of the special circumstance that the bonds had been issued under authority of the act of 1887, and thus held, in effect, that the requirements of Sec. 7 had not or could not be met by legislative provision for the levying and collection of a sufficient tax.

On the other hand, the Supreme Court of Texas, addressing itself to the identical questions, said: "It was

not the purpose of the convention, in adopting the foregoing articles, to require that a city or county should at the time of creating a debt ascertain the rate per cent. required to be levied upon the taxable values of the county, in order to raise a sufficient sum to pay the interest and provide a sinking fund upon that debt, and to actually levy that rate at the time." After citing authorities in support of this proposition, the Court goes on to say: "What the Constitution requires is that provision shall be made at the time, or shall have been previously made, by which the rate of tax to be levied is so definitely fixed—as was done in the case last cited—that it becomes merely a ministerial act to determine the rate to be levied. The Legislature has the power to make all such 'provision' for counties and cities, or it may leave it to the officers of such corporations to make it, when the debt is created; if made by either it is sufficient. Mitchel county has not provided for the collection of such tax, and the solution of the question now before us depends upon whether the laws under which the bonds were issued made such provisions as the Constitution required. On behalf of Mitchel county it is urged that by the terms of Sec. 7, Art. 11, of the Constitution the 'provision' which is required to be made for levying and collecting taxes with which to pay the interest and create a sinking fund upon the indebtedness of a county must be made by the officers of the county *at the time* the debt is incurred, and that the source of authority for making the levy and collecting the tax is the Constitution, and not the act of the Legislature." The Court then discusses Sec. 7, in connection with other provisions of the Constitution, and reaches the conclusion that it "contains no grant of authority to levy a tax nor designation of any official by whom the tax specified is to be levied and collected, but is in effect a limitation upon the power of the Legislature to authorize such corporations

to create debts." After citing some authorities on the interpretation of constitutions, the Court declares: "It is quite too plain for argument that if the laws of 1881 and 1884 or similar laws had never been passed, Mitchel county would have had no authority under the Constitution to contract the debts represented by the bonds nor to levy a tax for the payment of the interest and sinking fund on such debt; the power to do so could be derived from the Legislature only. If the Legislature had the power to grant authority to the county to make such provision, then that department could exercise the power itself. If the terms of the law are such that where the county has issued its bonds in compliance with it, the bondholder might resort to a Court and by *mandamus* compel the county to levy tax sufficient to pay the interest annually and to raise a sinking fund of not less than 2 per cent., then the provision would be sufficient under the Constitution. Whether less certain directions might meet the demands of the Constitution is not before us. This brings us to the consideration of the question, were the requirements of the statutes under which these bonds were issued so explicit as to constitute a compliance with the mandate of the Constitution?"

One of the bond issues, the validity of which was questioned in the Mitchel county case, was an issue of bonds for court house and jail purposes. The authority for such bonds was a statute passed in 1881. Unlike the act of 1884 and the act of 1887 (under which petitioner's bonds were issued) the act of 1881, while requiring the levy of a sufficient tax to pay the interest and create a sinking fund, did not specify the per cent. of sinking fund. The Court considered at length the question whether such a law met the constitutional requirement, and concluded that it did, inasmuch as the act must be read in connection and harmonized with the mandate of the Constitution, that a sinking fund of at least 2 per cent. must be

provided for. As the acts of 1884 and 1887 provided for a sinking fund of 4 per cent., the sufficiency of such a provision to meet the mandate of the Constitution was considered manifest. After quoting from the acts of 1881 and 1884 it was said: "The statutes quoted above were enacted by the Legislature in view of the requirements of Secs. 2 and 7, Art. 11, of the Constitution, and with the evident purpose of giving effect to the terms of those sections. As we have said before, the Legislature might have empowered the Commissioners' Court to provide for collecting the tax required by the Constitution, but it pursued, as we think, the wiser course of making the necessary provision by a general law, which applied to and governed the issuance of all bonds for the given purpose, whereby the taxpayer and the bondholder would be alike protected and uniformity secured."

The Court discussed at length, upon principle and authority, the question whether the legislative provision in the two acts were sufficient to satisfy the constitutional requirement, and held that it was. "It therefore follows," said the Court, "that it was a legal duty resting upon that Court (the Commissioners' Court), after issuing and selling the bonds under the authority given in the first section of each article, to annually levy and collect the tax necessary to raise the interest and sinking fund not less than the minimum expressed in each law and the District Court had the authority to enforce the performance of that duty by writ of mandamus, but would not control the discretion vested in the Commissioners' Court to levy and collect a tax which would provide for a sinking fund greater than 2 per cent. We think it manifest that there was no act involved in the performance of the duty enjoined by Sec. 2 of each of the acts which required the exercise of any discretion on the part of the Commissioners' Court, but that having determined the questions upon which the issuing of the bonds de-

pended, there remained nothing to be done but to perform the ministerial act of ascertaining the sum to be collected and the rate per cent. necessary to be levied upon the taxable values of the county each year and that the performance of this duty the District Court had the authority to enforce by a writ of mandamus."

We have no concern with the other questions discussed by the Court arising out of certain irregularities in the issuance of the bonds in question, *e. g.*, loaning court house bonds to the bridge fund, etc. Suffice it to say that upon the principles and reasoning, sufficiently indicated by the above quotations from the opinion, the bridge bonds in question were declared to be valid obligations of the county.

We submit that no argument is necessary to show the legal identity of the facts and issues involved in the two cases and the contrariety of the conclusions reached by the two courts.

### III.

*The Supreme Court of Texas was right, and the Circuit Court of Appeals was wrong, in the construction placed by them respectively on the Constitution and status in question.*

We believe that whether your Honors follow the familiar rule referred to by the Circuit Court of Appeals in its opinion in this case, that "a decision of the highest court of a State construing a provision of the State Constitution limiting the powers of counties and cities as to the creation of debts, is binding on the Federal courts," or whether you exercise an independent judgment in the matter, the result will be the same, and that is, that the construction by the Supreme Court of Texas of the Constitution and statutes concerned was right, and, hence, that the Circuit Court of Appeals erred in sustaining the demurrer and declaring illegal the issue of bonds to which petitioner's coupons belong.



We shall not attempt to fortify the opinion of the Supreme Court of Texas in the Mitchel county case; it is self-supporting. We shall content ourselves with briefly commenting upon the authorities cited in the opinion of the Circuit Court of Appeals, in order to show that they do not touch the points upon which we rely for the reversal of the decision of that court. No case was cited, and no case can be cited, where the question of the effect of a legislative provision for the levying and collection of a sufficient tax, etc., such as is made in the act of 1887, under which our bonds were issued, was presented or considered. The cases decided by the Supreme Court of Texas did not relate to bonds issued for the special purposes and under the special authority covered by Sec. 2 of Art. 11 of the Constitution and the legislation passed in compliance therewith. And in the cases from the Federal Courts the question of the sufficiency of a legislative provision for the levying of a tax as a compliance with the mandate of the Constitution was either not involved or not presented, considered or decided.

The decision in the case of Quaker City National Bank vs. Nolan County (C. C. A.), 66 F. R. 88, was very brief. The Court simply held that the Supreme Court of the State had decided that Sec. 7 of Art. 11 was applicable, and, hence, that the failure of the Commissioners' Court to itself make contemporaneous provisions for the levy of a tax was fatal to the validity of the bonds. In Millsaps vs. City of Terrell (C. C. A.), 60 F. R. 193, the Court decided that the bonds sued on were invalid because issued at a time when the city had already levied taxes to the full limit prescribed by the Constitution and pledged the same to other indebtedness, and, therefore, it was a legal impossibility to comply with the requirements of Secs. 5 and 7, Art. 11, in respect to the later bonds. Francis vs. Howard County (C. C. A.), 54 F. R. 487, was a case involving simply an overissue of bonds. The

case of *Terrell vs. Dessaint*, 71 Tex. 770 (9 S. W. 593), was one brought on a promissory note of the city of Terrell, for \$2000, payable in two years, which contained the recital that it was given in payment for material for waterworks supplies, and was payable out of the tax of  $\frac{1}{4}$  per cent. collected annually for general purposes. The note represented part of the purchase price of certain material for the extension of the waterworks of the city. As there was no contemporaneous provision made by the municipal corporation, and no previous legislative provision for the payment of this debt, and as it was not a debt for current expenses, recovery upon the note was denied. There is nothing in *Terrell vs. Dessaint*, or in *Nolan County vs. State*, 83 Tex. 183 (17 S. W. R. 823), which militates in any way against the contention made in support of the present application.

As we have stated above, the defense of the validity of the bonds which we now urge, based on the act of 1887, was urged in the Circuit Court of Appeals, both in printed and oral argument, but so convinced was the Court that the established jurisprudence of the State courts was opposed to us that our contention on this point was not discussed in the opinion. The opinion in the Mitchel county case of the Court of Civil Appeals was also filed with the court below; but, either because the Court of Civil Appeals was an inferior court or because its opinion was not supported by the unanswerable reasoning by which the Supreme Court fortified its decision, the matter was ignored in the reasons for the judgment complained of.

The case made out by the petition for a *certiorari* is, in a great measure, *sui generis*. An error has been committed by the Circuit Court of Appeals, and recovery of an honest debt, for which defendant has received the agreed consideration, has been denied. It so happened that the means of demonstrating the error which operates such a hardship upon petitioner did not come

into existence until too late to be availed of in the court below. Your Honors have the power to grant relief. Will you allow the error and the consequent injustice to be perpetuated?

If the decision in the Mitchel county case had been rendered before the decision in this case it can not be doubted that the Circuit Court of Appeals would not have held our bonds invalid. But if it were otherwise, then there is presented here a case of conflict between the State and Federal Courts, having jurisdiction of causes in Texas, in respect to the meaning and effect of important constitutional and statutory laws of the State affecting the validity of numerous issues of municipal bonds, representing large sums of money and held by many different owners, residents and non-residents, where the effect of the construction of such laws by the Federal courts will be practically to close the doors of such courts to the holders of such bonds and to force them into the State courts for the successful enforcement of their rights. This condition of things affords another reason for the favorable consideration by your Honors of the present application.

We do not feel that anything that we can write can enlighten your Honors in respect to the nature of the relief by *certiorari* or in respect to the classes of cases to which it should be extended. The best we can do is to present clearly the peculiar facts of this case and leave the rest to the wisdom and sense of justice of this Court.

In the appendix will be found the full text of the opinion and decision in the Mitchel county case and of the acts of 1884 and 1887 discussed in this brief.

Respectfully submitted,

FRANK W. HACKETT,  
GEO. F. PENDEXTER,  
T. W. GREGORY,  
JOSEPH PAXTON BLAIR,

*Attorneys for Petitioner.*

## APPENDIX.

### OPINION OF SUPREME COURT OF TEXAS.

COUNTY OF MITCHEL	} No. 562.
vs.	
CITY NATIONAL BANK OF PADUCAH, KY.	
	From Mitchel County, Second District.

The defendant in error sued Mitchel county in the District Court of that county to recover upon interest coupons alleged to have been attached to and representing the interest on certain bonds issued by the county for the purpose of building a court house and jail, and also to recover upon interest coupons alleged to have been attached to and representing the interest upon certain bonds issued by the said county for the purpose of constructing and purchasing bridges. The petition alleged in substance that Mitchel county being without a court house, on the different days therein mentioned executed and delivered to Martin, Byrne & Johnson a certain negotiable or written obligation, in which it was recited that the said bonds or obligation were issued for the erection of a court house in said county of Mitchel, each and all of them being of like tenor and effect except their dates; each bond being for the sum of \$1000, and bearing interest at the rate of 7 per cent. per annum, excepting numbers 51 to 55 inclusive, which bear 8 per cent. interest from date; each of the said bonds payable fifteen years from date. It was also alleged that the said county upon the different dates therein alleged issued to bearer other bonds described in the petition, for the purpose of con-

structing and purchasing bridges for the said county, which said bonds were each for the sum of \$500, payable in twenty years, bearing 8 per cent. interest from date.

It was alleged that the plaintiff was the legal and equitable owner and holder of the said bonds, and that the coupons sued upon represented the interest upon them for the several years mentioned therein, which the said county of Mitchel had failed and refused to pay, and that the said coupons had each been presented to the Commissioners' Court of Mitchel county for payment according to law, which had been refused. It was alleged in the petition that all of the said bonds were issued according to the laws of the State of Texas which authorized their issue.

The defendant filed a general demurrer to the said petition and a special exception thereto upon the ground that the petition showed that the defendant was a municipal corporation; that the alleged debt sued for is a debt not contracted for current expenses, and wholly fails to allege that at the time of the creation of the several debts evidenced by said alleged bonds and coupons the county made any provision for levying and collecting a sufficient tax to pay the interest thereon and provide at least 2 per cent. as a sinking fund to pay said indebtedness. The defendant also filed a general denial and a special plea in which the county set up the fact that no provision had been made by it for levying and collecting a tax to pay the interest and sinking fund upon the said bonds.

The District Court overruled the special exception No. 2, the substance of which is above stated, but no action appears to have been taken on the general demurrer. Trial was had before the Court, without a jury, and judgment was given for the plaintiff bank against the defendant upon the coupons representing the interest of a portion of the bonds and denied as to others, but it is not necessary here to designate the particular bonds which were sustained or those which were declared to be invalid.

The trial Court filed conclusions of fact, from which we make the following statement of the facts necessary in the consideration of the questions presented on this writ of error: On the tenth day of August, 1881, Mitchell county entered into a contract with Martin, Byrne & Johnson to build for it a court house and jail, for which the county was to pay them \$33,250, the Court house to cost \$21,323 and the jail \$11,927. The county was to pay in its bonds, which were to bear interest at 7 per cent. per annum, the bonds to be payable in fifteen years from their date and to have coupons attached representing the interest for each year. The first payment of \$10,000 in bonds was to be made upon completion of the first story of the jail and foundation of the court house. The second payment to be made of \$10,000 of the bonds when the jail was completed and accepted; and the last payment, \$13,250, to be made in bonds when both the court house and jail were completed.

On January 12, 1882, the county paid to the contractors \$10,000 in ten bonds numbered from 1 to 10; on July 5, 1882, the county paid to the contractors ten bonds for \$1000 each numbered 11 to 20 inclusive; April 25, 1883, the county paid to the contractors \$10,000 in bonds numbered 21 to 30 inclusive. Of the aforesaid bonds the plaintiff owns Nos. 11 to 16 inclusive and 24 to 30 inclusive. The others are outstanding in the hands of other parties.

In 1884, the county being again without a court house issued to the same parties, Martin, Byrne & Johnson, twenty-two bonds of \$1000 each numbered from 34 to 55 inclusive, which were the same in form as the first bonds issued and like them in every particular excepting the date, and that the latter bonds bear interest at 8 per cent. instead of 7. Of these last named bonds the plaintiff owns Nos. 51 to 55 inclusive. Each of the aforesaid bonds was payable to Martin, Byrne & Johnson or bearer.



At different times, as hereinafter stated, Mitchel county caused to be issued bonds numbered from 1 to 62, payable to bearer, each for the sum of \$500, due twenty years from date, with 8 per cent. interest, and a coupon representing the interest for each year attached to each bond. Each of the said bonds contained the following recital: "This bond is issued for the purpose of obtaining money to buy and construct bridges for public uses within the said county of Mitchel, in pursuance of an act entitled 'An act to authorize counties to issue bonds for bridge purposes and to levy a tax to pay the same,' passed at the special session of the Eighteenth Legislature, convened at the city of Austin, Texas, January 8 and adjourned the 6th day of February, 1884." The plaintiff is the owner of these last named bonds numbered 1 to 26 inclusive, and Nos. 34, 35, 60 and 61. The plaintiff paid value for all of the bonds herein stated as belonging to it, and acquired them in the regular course of business, without notice of any defect in them, except such as the law would charge it to have upon the facts as shown upon the record of the Commissioners' Court of Mitchel county.

The Commissioners' Court of Mitchel county did not at any time make any provision for levying and collecting the tax to pay the interest upon the aforesaid bonds, or any of them, nor to raise a sinking fund for their redemption, except that for the year 1881 the Court levied a court-house and jail tax of twenty-five cents on the \$100. In 1882 it levied fifty cents on the one hundred dollars for the same purpose, and since that time, until 1895, it has levied annually twenty-five cents on the one hundred dollars. For each year since the issuing of the bonds for bridge purposes the Court has levied fifteen cents on the one hundred dollars as a tax for road and bridge purposes.

The taxable values of Mitchel county were for the different years as follows: For 1881, \$592,961; for 1882,

\$1,155,479; for 1883, \$2,250,489; for 1884, \$3,118,239. And the counties attached to Mitchel county for judicial purposes had taxable values for the different years as follows: For 1881, \$138,861; for 1882, \$318,248; for 1883, \$361,355; for 1884, \$995,080.

The court found to be due upon the coupons in suit the following sums: Upon the court house bonds the sum of \$1820, and upon the bridge bonds the sum of \$2720. The coupons which were sued upon were all presented to the Commissioners' Court of Mitchel county, Texas, in proper form, and payment demanded, and all of them have been by said court wholly refused and disallowed.

On February 11, 1884, the Commissioners' Court of Mitchel county made the following order, which was duly entered upon the minutes of that court: "Ordered that bonds of Mitchel county, to the amount of ten thousand dollars, issue and be set apart for the building and improving of bridges, and for opening and improving public roads of said county, said bonds to bear 8 per cent. interest and to run to the extent of the law, and to be taken up as the exigencies of the county demands." On June 3, 1884, bonds numbered 1 to 6 inclusive were issued under this order. May, 27, 1884, the Commissioners' Court ordered that a bond for \$500 issue in favor of W. L. Pendleton, contractor for building bridges, etc. The clerk issued to Pendleton bond No. 9. August 13, 1884, the said court directed bonds for \$100 (\$1000) to be delivered to Mahoney & Evans, bridge builders, on their contract for \$5800, and two bonds numbered 7 and 8 were delivered to them August 16, 1884. August 13, 1884, the Commissioners' Court directed the clerk to issue bridge bonds to Mahoney & Evans for the balance due them on their contract, and the clerk issued five bonds and delivered them to the contractors, being Nos. 14 to 18 inclusive.

On August 28, 1884, the Commissioners' Court entered

the following order: "That a special fund be established as the cash fund, which shall be set apart for the purpose of meeting any demands against the county that must necessarily be paid in cash; and that the clerk of this county issue four bonds on the road and bridge fund for the sum of \$500 each, to run twenty years, with interest at 8 per cent. per annum, said bonds to be sold and the fund transferred from the road and bridge fund to the cash fund." Four bonds were issued, being Nos. 10 to 13 inclusive, under the first order copied herein, and on January 12, 1885, two bonds were issued to pay for repairing bridges, being Nos. 19 and 20, which exhausted the order for the issuing of \$10,000 of bonds.

We copy from the findings of the trial court as follows:

"On February 13, 1885, it was ordered by the court that, instead of issuing scrip on the general fund to cover the amount of Martin, Byrne & Johnson's note, that same be paid out of money resulting from the sale of bridge bonds. And that the clerk is ordered to issue six bridge bonds of \$500 each, and deliver the same to Wm. Martin, who is authorized to make sale of said bonds, and after deducting the amount of his note, with interest thereon, to pay the remainder into the treasury to the credit of the road and bridge fund.' Under this order bonds, numbered from 21 to 26 inclusive, were issued the 13th of February, 1885.

"On May 14, 1885, the Court made an order 'that road and bridge bonds be issued to Martin, Byrne & Johnson for the balance due on the new court house when it can be ascertained what said amount of balance is after paying on said house all available cash that can be used for paying for same,' and on the same day by order of the Court E. F. Swinney was appointed financial agent of the county to sell bonds so issued.

"On June 25, 1885, the Court made the following order, viz.: 'It is hereby made an order of this Court that the

road and bridge bonds ordered issued at a previous term of this Court be issued and sold as directed in the minutes of that meeting. And it is further ordered to be recorded that the sum of money represented in and by the bonds to be issued, and the same is made a loan from the road and bridge fund to the court house and jail fund, there being an excess of unexpended bonds in said road and bridge fund, and that the same be paid back to the road and bridge fund as it accumulates in the court house and jail fund from the collection of taxes in that fund. And it is made a part of this order that the sum of \$15,000 in road and bridge bonds, the same being thirty bonds of \$500 each, be issued and sold as the law directs; that is at not less than par value; the contractors to receive what cash there is now in the county treasury belonging to the court house and jail fund, the sum of \$1306.56, and to be paid by an order of this Court the sum of money yet uncollected as taxes in the court house and jail fund on the tax roll to be collected this fiscal year, amounting, probably, to \$1900. This last payment to be made only after deducting all legal offsets claimed by the county in the way of rents, unfinished work on the court house, reservations in the contract as to delay in its completion, etc.; the same to be ascertained by the Commissioners' Court at a regular meeting when there is a full board present. Upon this order on June 27, 1885, thirty bridge bonds were issued, numbered from 33 to 62, inclusive.

"On August 14, 1885, there was an order of the Court that the clerk issue a warrant on the court house and jail fund in favor of Martin, Byrne & Johnson for the sum of \$16,892.11, balance due on the new court house. And ordering the treasurer to collect of E. F. Swinney, financial agent, the sum of \$14,925, the amount for which said bonds were sold, less \$75 commission allowed him, and that the same be paid on the said warrant."

This suit was instituted by the defendant in error against

Mitchel county to recover of it the amounts specified in the several coupons described in the petition, which represent the interest that had accrued upon the bonds of the said county which defendant in error claims to own. The plaintiff in error contends that the bonds are void, because at the time the debt was created no provision was made by the county for levying and collecting a tax to pay the interest and to provide a sinking fund, as required by the following section of the Constitution: "All counties and cities bordering on the coast of the Gulf of Mexico are hereby authorized, upon a vote of two-thirds of the taxpayers therein (to be ascertained as may be provided by law), to levy and collect such tax for construction of sea walls, breakwaters or sanitary purposes as may be authorized by law, and may create a debt for such works and issue bonds in evidence thereof. But no debt for any purpose shall ever be incurred, in any manner, by any city or county unless provision is made, at the time of creating the same, for levying and collecting a sufficient tax to pay the interest thereon, and provide at least 2 per cent. as a sinking fund; and the condemnation of the right of way for the erection of such works shall be fully provided for" (Art. 11, Sec. 7). The defendant in error claims that the article quoted does not apply to counties other than coast counties. Without deciding that question, we will examine the case under the assumption that the article of the Constitution applies to all counties, and that the Legislature so regarded it in enacting the laws under which the bonds in question were issued.

It was not the purpose of the convention in adopting the foregoing article to require that a city or county should at the time of creating a debt ascertain the *rate per cent.* required to be levied upon the taxable values of the county in order to raise a sufficient sum to pay the interest and provide a sinking fund upon that debt and to actually levy that rate of tax at the time (Bassett vs. El Paso, 88 Tex.

175). In the case cited the city of El Paso had at the time that it determined to issue its bonds, by an ordinance, provided for the collection annually of a given sum for the purpose of paying the interest which might accrue upon the said bonds, and also a given sum to be raised annually as a sinking fund. This Court said: "The language and purpose of these provisions (of the Constitution) seem to be satisfied by an order providing for the annual collection by taxation of a sufficient sum to pay the interest thereon and create a sinking fund, etc., though it does not fix the rate or per cent. of taxation for each year by which such sum is to be collected, but leaves the fixing of such rate for each successive year to the Commissioners' Court or City Council. \* \* \*

"As stated above, we have not deemed it necessary to determine whether the order of August 11, 1893, actually levied a tax, as we are of the opinion that it fully complied with the law by making provision for the collection of the interest and sinking fund by taxation."

What the Constitution requires is that *provision* shall be made at the time, *or shall have been previously made*, by which the rate of tax to be levied is so definitely fixed—as was done in the case last cited—that it becomes merely a ministerial act to determine the rate to be levied. The *Legislature* has the power to make all such "provision" for counties and cities, or it may leave it to officers of such corporation to make it when the debt is created; if wade by either it is sufficient. Mitchel county has not provided for the collection of such tax, and the solution of the question now before us depends upon whether the laws under which the bonds were issued made such "provision" as the Constitution required.

On behalf of Mitchel county it is urged that by the terms of Sec. 7, Art 11, of the Constitution, the "provision" which is required to be made for levying and collecting taxes with which to pay the interest and create a



sinking fund upon the indebtedness of a county must be made by the officers of the county *at the time* the debt is incurred and that the source of authority for making the levy and collecting the tax is the Constitution and not the act of the Legislature. The only parts of the Constitution which bear upon this subject are Sec. 9 of Art. 8, and Secs. 2 and 7 of Art. 11. Section 9 confers no authority upon any officer of a city or county to levy a tax for any purpose, but by the language "no county, city or town shall levy more than one-half of said State tax \* \* \*" and for the erection of public buildings not to exceed fifty cents on the one hundred dollars in any one year," places a prohibition or limitation upon the power of the Legislature to authorize counties to impose taxes for such purposes. Section 2 of Art. 11 expressly requires the enactment of a general law to carry its mandates into effect, and Sec. 7 of the same article contains no grant of authority to levy a tax nor designation of any official by whom the tax specified is to be levied and collected, but is in effect a limitation upon the power of the Legislature to authorize such corporations to create debts. In the sense that all laws in conflict with these prohibitions are void, Sec. 9, Art. 8, and Sec. 7, Art. 11, are self-executing, but in so far as anything is required to be done to carry them into effect they are not so, because they prescribe no rules by which any act could be done in the enforcement of their requirements. In his work on Constitutional Limitation, p. 100, Mr. Cooley says: "A constitutional provision may be said to be self-executing if it supplies a sufficient rule by means of which the right given may be enjoyed and protected or the duty imposed may be enforced; and it is not self-executing when it merely indicates principles, without laying down rules by means of which these principles may be given the force of law." It is quite too plain for argument that if the laws of 1881 and 1884 or similar laws had never been

passed, Mitchel county would have had no authority under the Constitution to contract the debts represented by the bonds nor to levy a tax for the payment of the interest and sinking fund on such debt; the power to do so could be derived from the Legislature only. If the Legislature had the power to grant authority to the county to make such provisions, then that department could exercise the power itself.

If the terms of the law are such that when the county has issued its bonds in compliance with it, the bondholder might resort to a court and by mandamus compel the county to levy a tax sufficient to pay the interest annually and to raise a sinking fund of not less than 2 per cent., then the provision would be sufficient under the Constitution. Whether less certain directions might meet the demands of the Constitution is not before us. This brings us to the consideration of the question, were the requirements of the statutes under which these bonds were issued so explicit as to constitute a compliance with the mandate of the Constitution?

The bonds known as court house bonds were issued under an act of the Legislature approved February 11, A. D. 1881, Sections 1 and 2 of which read as follows:

"SECTION 1. That the County Commissioners' Court of any county which has no court house at the county seat is hereby authorized and empowered to issue the bonds of said county, with interest coupons attached, in such amounts as may be necessary to erect a suitable building for a court house; said bonds running not exceeding fifteen years, and redeemable at the pleasure of the county, and bearing interest at a rate not exceeding 8 per cent. per annum.

"SEC. 2. The Commissioners' Court of the county shall levy an annual *ad valorem* tax on the property in said county sufficient to pay the interest, and create a sinking fund for the redemption of said bonds, not to ex-

ceed one-fourth of 1 per cent. for any one year." (Gen. Laws 1881, p. 5.)

The bridge bonds were issued under an act of the eighteenth legislature, special session, 1884, the first and second sections of which read as follows:

"SEC. 1. That the County Commissioners' Courts of the several counties of the State are hereby authorized and empowered to issue the bonds of said county, with interest coupons attached, for such amounts as may be necessary for the purpose of buying or constructing bridges for public uses within such county, said bonds to run not exceeding twenty years and bear interest at any rate not to exceed 8 per cent. per annum.

"SEC. 2. The Commissioners' Court shall levy an annual *ad valorem* tax not to exceed fifteen cents on the one hundred dollars valuation, sufficient to pay the interest on, and create a sinking fund for the redemption of said bonds. The sinking fund herein provided for shall not be less than 4 per cent. on the full sum for which the bonds are issued. (Gen. Laws, special session, 1884, pp. 29-30.)

The statutes quoted above were enacted by the Legislature in view of the requirements of Secs. 2 and 7, Art. 11 of the Constitution, and with the evident purpose of giving effect to the terms of those sections. As we said before, the Legislature might have empowered the Commissioners' Court to provide for collecting the tax required by the Constitution, but it pursued, as we think, the wiser course of making the necessary provision by a general law, which applied to and governed the issuance of all bonds for the given purpose, whereby the taxpayer and the bondholder would be alike protected and uniformity secured.

Under such system the purchaser of bonds could easily ascertain the extent to which the taxing power of a county had been appropriated and by looking to the taxable

values of the county could form a just estimate of the worth of such securities, which we think would greatly tend to enhance their market value. Taxpayers would be furnished the means of learning the manner in which their finances had been managed by those to whom they had entrusted the business of the county, and in case such officers sought re-election could easily call them to account for any failure in the discharge of their duties. The effect of legislation would be to compel a county to keep its indebtedness within the limits of its present power of taxation instead of piling up a debt which would absorb the future revenues of the county.

Counsel for defendant in error in their briefs and printed argument, as well as in an able argument before the Court, contend that by enactment of Sec. 2 of the act of 1881, the Legislature intended to require of the Commissioners' Court to levy and collect a sinking fund sufficient to discharge the bonds at maturity, and that since the bonds could not run for a greater time than fifteen years, the sinking fund must necessarily exceed 2 per cent., and thus the Constitution would be complied with. The position is plausible, but we are of opinion that the Legislature intended by the use of the words "and create a sinking fund for the redemption of said bonds not to exceed one-fourth of 1 per cent. in any one year," to fix the minimum sinking fund at the rate prescribed by the Constitution and to limit the maximum by that amount, which could be raised from a tax of one-fourth of 1 per cent. Section 7 of Art. 11 of the Constitution, by prohibiting the creation of a debt unless provision was made for creating a sinking fund of at least 2 per cent., thereby prescribed that the sinking fund should not be less than the rate per cent. named, and the Legislature could not therefore fix a rate nor authorize the Commissioners' Court to fix a rate less than that prescribed by the Constitution.

If, as claimed by the plaintiff in error, Sec. 7 of Art.

11 of the Constitution applies to all counties and cities in the State (which we assume in this discussion), then every law enacted by the Legislature which authorizes the creation of a debt by cities or counties must conform to the requirements of that section or it will be invalid. In other words, a law which authorized the creation of a debt by a city and county and did not provide for, or authorize the municipal authorities to provide for, levying and collecting a tax sufficient to pay the interest on such debt and create a sinking fund of at least 2 per cent. for its payment would be void. We understand that the provision required by the Constitution means such fixed and definite arrangements for the levying and collecting of such tax as would become a legal right in favor of the holders of bonds issued thereon or in favor of any person to whom such debt might be payable. It is not sufficient that the municipal authorities should by the law be authorized to levy and collect a tax sufficient to produce a sinking fund greater than 2 per cent., but to comply with the Constitution the law must itself provide for a sinking fund not less than 2 per cent., or require of the municipal authorities to levy and collect a tax sufficient to produce the minimum prescribed by the Constitution.

The laws of 1881 and 1884 being enacted by the Legislature in pursuance of and for the purpose of putting into force the constitutional provisions before cited, it is the duty of the courts to so construe the terms of the laws as to make them valid and to give effect to them. Under Sec. 7, Art. 11, the Legislature could not have empowered the Commissioners' Court to create a sinking fund of less than 2 per cent., and as the Commissioners' Court could not, under the law and the Constitution, have fixed a sinking fund at less than that rate, we must construe the language used in the act of 1881, Sec. 2, which commands the Commissioners' Court to levy and collect a sinking fund for the redemption of the bonds,

o mean a sinking fund of not less than 2 per cent., as defined and limited by the Constitution. (G. B. & C. N. G. Ry. Co. vs. Gross, 47 Texas, 428; McKenzie vs. Baker, 88 Texas, 677; Rosenberg vs. Meeks, 67 Texas, 579; U. S. vs. Coombs, 12 Peters, 72; Grenada County vs. Brown, 112 U. S. 261; Bailey vs. Phila. & Baltimore R. Co., 4 Harrington, 389; 44 Am. Dec., 593; Duncomb vs. Prindle, 12 Iowa, 1; Millay vs. White, 86 Ky. 170; Temmick vs. Owings, 70 Md., 246; Marshall vs. Grimes, 41 Miss. 27; Bigelow vs. Wis. R. R. Co., 37 Wis. 578; McWigan vs. Railroad Co., 95 N. C. 429; Nolan County vs. State, 83 Texas, 195.) In case of G. B. & C. N. G. R. W. Co. vs. Gross, above cited, the railroad company brought suit against Gross, the commissioner of the land office, to compel him to issue to the railroad company certificates for lands which might be located singly, as in the case of headright certificate. The charter of the railroad company was enacted on the second day of February, 1875, and provided: "Whenever any section of five miles of said road has been completed the said company, through its president and secretary, may give notice of the same to the Governor of this State, in writing, whose duty it shall be, on receipt of such notice, to order the State engineer, if there be any, or if there be none, then to appoint a skilful engineer to examine the said section of road and report under oath; and if said section of five miles of said road be found to be constructed and in running order, in substantial manner, then the Governor shall certify the same to the commissioner of the general land office, and he shall issue to the said company sixteen land certificates, of six hundred and forty acres each, for each and every mile of road so constructed and put in running order, and in like manner with each and every succeeding five miles of said road, until the whole has been completed." In 1876 the Governor gave his certificate in the manner

required by law, and the railroad company applied to the commissioner of the general land office for eighty land certificates for six hundred and forty acres each, such as might be located and surveyed in single sections, which the commissioner refused to issue, but proposed to issue certificates conditioned so as to require each certificate to be located upon two tracts of six hundred and forty acres each, one for the railway company, the other for the public school fund. The railroad company refused to accept these certificates, and brought suit to obtain a writ of mandamus against the commissioner compelling him to issue the certificates as demanded. On March 18, 1873, the Legislature passed an act by which it set apart to the public-school fund one-half of the public domain, and prescribed "that all land certificates heretofore issued to any railroad company or other corporation of any nature whatever for internal improvements or for any other object, or any lands hereafter granted in any manner to any of said corporations or companies for any such object shall be located and surveyed in alternate sections of 640 acres each, as directed by an act entitled 'An act to encourage the construction of railroads in Texas by donations of land,' approved January 30, 1854." The charter of the railroad company was enacted subsequently to the last above cited act of the Legislature, and the question before the Court was whether the grant of the certificates therein should be construed so as to give effect to the law of 1873. In discussing the question this Court said: "At the time the appellant's charter was granted we hold that there was in force a general law which required the certificates to railroads to be in alternate sections, which certificates may be located and patented on any of the public domain of this State according to the general law on the principle of alternate sections. \* \* \* We think that the act incorporating this railroad company was passed with reference to the system of locating and surveying railroad certificates

which had long been in force, and that it was the legislative intent to conform to that system and thereby preserve uniformity in the amount and character of bounty extended." And the Court held that the language of the charter must be construed as if it provided for the issuing to the railroad company of certificates to be located in alternate sections, as required in the general law.

In 1860 the Legislature of the State of Mississippi enacted a law whereby certain counties of the State might subscribe to the capital stock of a railroad company upon a vote of the majority of the legal voters of the county. In 1871 the Legislature of that State so amended the law of 1860 as to include in its terms the county of Grenada. In the bill amending the former law it was provided that elections upon the subject of issuing bonds in aid of railroads should be held in accordance with the law of which that was amendatory and in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution of the State. In 1869, after the enactment of the original law, that State adopted a Constitution in which was a provision forbidding the Legislature to pass any law authorizing a county to subscribe for stock in a railroad unless it was assented to by two-thirds of the qualified voters of that county. The county of Grenada, upon a two-thirds vote of its qualified voters, subscribed for \$50,000 of the capital stock of a railroad company, issuing bonds therefor, and, being sued upon the bonds, defended the action upon the ground that the law under which they were issued was void, because it authorized their issue upon a majority instead of a two-thirds vote, as required by the Constitution. There was a direct conflict between the language of the act of the Legislature and the Constitution, except that the amendatory act prescribed that the election should be held in accordance with the Constitution. The Supreme Court of the United States, in the case of Grenada County vs. Brown, 112 U. S. 261, construed the statute to mean that



a two-thirds vote was required in order to issue the bonds, and, thereby, made the act conform to and harmonize with the Constitution of the State, and with the policy of the State upon this subject. That Court said: "It certainly can not be said that a different construction is required by the obvious import of the words of the statute. But if there were room for two constructions, both equally obvious and reasonable, the Court must, in deference to the Legislature of the State, assume that it did not overlook the provisions of the Constitution and designed the act of 1871 to take effect. Our duty, therefore, is to adopt that construction which, without doing violence to the fair meaning of the words used, brings the statute into harmony with the provisions of the Constitution."

Article 4861 of the Revised Statutes reads as follows: "No Court of this State shall have power, authority or jurisdiction to issue the writ of *mandamus*, or injunction, or any other mandatory or compulsory writ of process against any of the officers of the executive departments of the government of this State, to order or compel the performance of any act or duty which, by the laws of this State, they or either of them are authorized to perform, whether such act or duty be judicial, ministerial or discretionary."

And Art. 946 is in the following language: "The Supreme Court, or any justice thereof, shall have power to issue writs of *habeas corpus* as may be prescribed by law; and the said Court, or the justices thereof, may issue writs of *mandamus*, *procedendo*, *certiorari* and all writs necessary to enforce the jurisdiction of said Court; and in term time or vacation may issue writs of *quo warranto* or *mandamus* against any district judge or officer of the State government, except the Governor of the State."

In *McKenzie vs. Baker*, 88 Texas, 677, the question was made that Art. 4861 forbids that any court in this State should issue a *mandamus* against the heads of the

departments of the State government, and that therefore the Court had no jurisdiction to grant the writ prayed for. The question before the Court was, which of these articles should yield, if they could not be so construed that both could stand, and Judge Gaines, for the Court, said: "The rule is that where a general intention is expressed, and the act expresses also a particular intention incompatible with the general intention, the particular intention is to be considered in the nature of an exception. This is no arbitrary canon of construction, but is a rule founded upon experience and sound reason. It follows from this rule that Art. 4861 should be construed to read: 'No court in this State except the Supreme Court shall have power,' etc. This construction preserves both articles, and that construction should always be avoided by which any provision of the statute would fail altogether." It will be observed that the Court decided that Art. 946 should stand in preference to the other article, if one must yield, and in order that both might be preserved and given effect to, the language of Art. 4861 was construed so as to embrace an exception understood but not expressed.

In *Nolan County vs. State*, 83 Texas, 195, the Court had under consideration Sec. 3 of the act now under examination, which is in these words: "The county shall not issue a larger number of bonds than a tax of one-fourth of 1 per cent. annually will liquidate in ten years, and such bonds shall be sold only at their face or par value." Independent of the Constitution the language quoted committed to the Commissioners' Court the power to determine what amount of bonds could be liquidated in ten years by a tax of one-fourth of 1 per cent., but the Court held that this section must be construed in connection with the constitutional limitation contained in original Sec. 9, Art. 8 of the Constitution, which reads: "The State tax on property, exclusive of the tax neces-

sary to pay the public debt, shall never exceed fifty cents on the one hundred dollars valuation; and no county, city or town shall levy more than one-half of said State tax, except for the payment of debts already incurred, and for the erection of public buildings, not to exceed fifty cents on the one hundred dollars in any one year, and except as in this Constitution is otherwise provided." (Const. 1876.) Judge Gaines, for the Court, said: "If our Constitution were silent upon this subject, then it might be reasonably held that Sec. 3 of the statute quoted above authorized the Commissioners' Court to determine the question as to the amount of bonds 'a tax of one-fourth of 1 per cent. annually will liquidate in ten years.' But there being a provision in the Constitution bearing directly upon that subject, we are of the opinion that this section must be construed in connection with it. The limit of the Constitution being an amount upon which a tax of one-half of 1 per cent. would pay annually the interest and 2 per cent. as a sinking fund, and the statutory requirements being such an amount only as one-fourth of 1 per cent. would liquidate in a period of ten years, it was not absolutely necessary that the commissioners should be governed by the same rule in determining the two limits. An amount of indebtedness that would be liquidated within ten years, though based upon a valuation in excess of that shown by the assessment rolls, might still be within the constitutional limit, which permits the creation of such a debt as will be ultimately paid by an annual tax of one-half of 1 per cent. upon the taxable values of the county as shown by the official assessment. But we think it more reasonable to presume that the Legislature intended that the same rule should govern in determining both limits, and that the Commissioners' Court should not look beyond the assessment rolls in ascertaining the amount of the indebtedness which the statute authorizes them to create." Section 3 of the same act, of which we are considering

Sec. 2, was construed by this Court as if it read: "The county shall not issue a larger number of bonds than a tax of one-fourth of 1 per cent. on the taxable values as shown by the tax rolls of the county will liquidate in ten years"

We conclude that Sec. 2 of the act of 1881 authorizing the issuance of court house bonds should be read as if the words of the Constitution had been introduced into the act itself—that is, as follows: "The Commissioners' Court of the county shall levy an annual *ad valorem* tax on the property in the said county sufficient to pay the interest and create a sinking fund of not less than 2 per cent. for the redemption of the said bonds, not to exceed one-fourth of 1 per cent. for any one year."

So reading Sec. 2 of the law of 1881, both acts under which the bonds in question were issued are practically the same so far as the question of their compliance or non-compliance with the Constitution is concerned; and we now come to inquire whether those laws make such provision for the levying and collecting of a tax to pay the interest on the bonds issued thereunder and to create a sinking fund for their redemption as is required by Sec. 7, Art. 11 of the Constitution.

If the District Court of Mitchel county could, upon a proper showing of the facts, have required the Commissioners' court of that county to levy and collect a sufficient tax to pay the interest upon the bonds and create a sinking fund of not less than 2 per cent. per annum, and could have enforced that requirement by a writ of *mandamus*, then the provision made by the statutes is a sufficient compliance with the Constitution and the bonds so far as that question affects them would be valid. For the purpose of testing the sufficiency of those statutes in this particular, we will examine them in reference to their application to the court house bonds involved in this litigation.

There being no court house in the county of Mitchel,

the Commissioners' Court of that county was by law vested with the discretionary power to determine the following questions with reference to making the improvement needed: (1) Whether it would build a court house or not; (2) what the cost of the building should be; (3) whether the building should be paid for by the sale of bonds or otherwise; (4) if by selling bonds, then at what time the bonds should mature and the rate of interest they should bear; (5) what sinking fund exceeding 2 per cent., if any, should be provided within the limits of the law. That court exercised the discretion vested in it upon all matters above named except the sinking fund. No per cent for sinking fund has been named by the Court, and we must examine the question upon the basis that the minimum expressed in the law is to govern as to the sinking fund to be provided for by the levy of taxes. In order to simplify the matter we will consider the first ten thousand dollars in bonds issued in 1882 as if they constituted the entire series of bonds issued for the purpose of building a court house, for the reason that this issue was alone based upon the assessment of values for the county for the year 1881, and we can more readily apply the principles which are to govern in the determination of this question by thus limiting the inquiry than we could by pursuing the examination through all the various issues of the different classes of bonds.

The tax rolls of Mitchel county for the year 1881 showed the taxable values of that county to be \$592,961. The Commissioners' Court of the county determined to build a court house, for which purpose bonds payable at fifteen years from date, to bear 7 per cent. interest per annum, to the amount of \$10,000, were issued and sold by the county. We have here stated the data from which, by a simple calculation, we can arrive at the sum to be collected each year for the purpose of paying the interest upon the bonds and provide a sinking fund for their re-

demption. Two per cent. on ten thousand dollars would give two hundred dollars annually as the sinking fund to be collected, and 7 per cent. on that sum would yield seven hundred dollars necessary to be collected as interest, aggregating nine hundred dollars to be raised the first year to pay interest and sinking fund upon a taxable value of \$592,961, which would require a levy of a fraction more than fifteen cents on the one hundred dollars of taxable values. The Commissioners' Court in fact levied twenty-five cents on the one hundred dollars of values for the first year, and continued to levy that rate per cent. for each subsequent year up to 1895. In order to test the question that we have suggested—that is, did there remain anything to be done by the Commissioners' Court which involved the exercise of discretion, let us suppose that Court had refused to levy the tax after the bonds were issued and sold, and that the bondholders, upon a proper showing, applied to the District Court for a writ of *mandamus* to compel the Commissioners' Court of Mitchel county to levy a tax sufficient to raise the interest and sinking fund at the rate prescribed as the minimum.

What answer could the Commissioners' Court of that county have made to such an application? As we have before shown, the act of issuing the bonds necessarily determined every fact involved in making provision for the interest and sinking fund, except the taxable values of the county, which was a matter of record and shown by the tax rolls by which the Commissioners' Court must be governed. What remained to be done that might be done by one person or Court in a manner different from that in which another person or Court might perform the same act? It may be answered, that the Commissioners' Court had the discretion to fix any rate of sinking fund not less than 2 per cent., which would not make the taxes for any one year exceed 25 cents on the \$100, and that this was a matter of discretion. That is true, but that Court had

not the discretion to provide for no sinking fund, nor had it the discretion to provide for a sinking fund less than 2 per cent. It therefore follows, that it was a legal duty resting upon that Court, after issuing and selling the bonds under the authority given in the first section of each act, to annually levy and collect the tax necessary to raise the interest and sinking fund not less than the minimum expressed in each law, and the District Court had the authority to enforce the performance of that duty by writ of *mandamus*, but would not control the discretion vested in the Commissioners' Court to levy and collect a tax which would provide for a sinking fund greater than 2 per cent.

We think it manifest that there was no act involved in the performance of the duty enjoined by Sec. 2 of each of the acts which required the exercise of any discretion on the part of the Commissioners' Court; but that having determined the questions upon which the issuing of the bonds depended, there remained nothing to be done but to perform the ministerial act of ascertaining the sum to be collected and the rate per cent. necessary to be levied upon the taxable values of the county each year, and that the performance of this duty the District Court had the authority to enforce by a writ of *mandamus* (*De Poyster vs. Baker*, 89 Texas, 155; *Commissioner General Land Office vs. Smith*, 5 Texas, 471; *Coy vs. City Council of Lyons*, 17 Iowa, 1; 85 Am Dec. 539; *Manor vs. McCall*, 5 Ga. 522; *Tarver vs. Tallapoosa*, 17 Ala. 527; *Stevenson vs. Summit*, 35 Iowa, 462).

The plaintiff in error insists that Nos. 10, 11, 12, 13, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 34, 35, 36, 37, 60 and 61 of the bridge bonds are void because they were issued for a purpose not authorized by law, and that the defendant in error is chargeable with notice of the facts which appear upon the record of the Commissioners' Court in reference thereto. The Court of Civil Appeals held that the bonds were

valid in the hands of the defendant in error, because it acquired them in the course of business for a valuable consideration before maturity and without actual notice of such defects, and because each of the said bonds contained a recital that it was issued "for the purpose of obtaining money to buy and construct bridges for public use within the county of Mitchel, in pursuance of an act entitled 'An act to authorize counties to issue bonds for bridge purposes and to levy a tax to pay the same,' " etc. The Court of Civil Appeals said: "We do not think under the circumstances stated that the purchaser was required to examine the orders of the Commissioners' Court for the purpose of testing their validity," and in support of that position cited and quoted from *Nolan County vs. The State*, 83 Texas, 194.

In that case the bonds in question were issued under an order which upon its face showed that the purpose was to build a court house for Nolan county, but some of the bonds were in fact intended at the time to be and were afterward applied to the payment of a debt contracted by the county in construction of a jail, for which latter purpose the law did not at that time authorize the county to issue bonds. Each of the bonds contained the recital that it was issued for the purpose of building a court house, under the act of February 11, 1881, giving the title of the act. This Court, through Judge Gaines, said: "If a purchaser were bound to inquire of the existence of the facts which empowered the Court to issue bonds to build a court house and to know that the county had no court house, in view of the recitals upon the face of the obligation, he was bound to look no further. He had the right to rely upon the truth of such recitals; having paid value for the bonds without actual knowledge of their illegality, the county will be estopped to set up that they were not issued for the purpose for which they purported to be issued." Taking that part



quoted by the Court of Civil Appeals from the opinion, disconnected from what precedes it, the conclusion of the Court of Civil Appeals might be reached; but considered in connection with the preceding sentence and with the facts upon which the opinion was based, it is apparent that the Court did not intend to hold that the purchaser would not be chargeable with notice of what appears on the face of the order under which such bonds were issued. The facts recited, and of which the Court was treating, were such as the Commissioners' Court must determine, and which would not appear of record, except, as stated by the Court, upon the record or in the bonds. The scope of that part of the opinion quoted by the Court of Civil Appeals is shown by the following extract from the same opinion: "If, instead of being limited to the amount of taxable property as shown by the assessor's rolls, the Constitution had conferred upon the Commissioners' Court the power of determining that question for themselves, then, according to the rule laid down in *Marcy vs. Oswego*, *supra*, and recognized in the case of *The Citizens Bank vs. Terrell*, *supra*, their determination of the amount would have been conclusive, and would have precluded inquiry into the power to issue the bonds in so far as the question of amount is concerned. But the power being limited as to the amount by the official assessment, the commissioners were not authorized to look beyond it and to determine the extent of their power from other data within their reach. In such a case the rule established in *Dixon County vs. Field*, 111 United States, 94, and acted upon in *The Citizens Bank vs. Terrell*, applies." The Court was here treating of a fact of record and announced the rule applicable to the facts of this case. The Commissioners' Court can only authorize the issue of bonds by order entered of record. (*Ball, Hutchins & Co. vs. Presidio County*, 88 Texas, 64.) The Commissioners' Court of Mitchel county entered an order on

its minutes on February 11, 1884, to the effect that bonds to the amount of \$10,000 should be issued for the purpose of building and improving bridges and for opening and improving public roads of the said county, said bonds to bear 8 per cent. interest and to run to the extent of the law, which was twenty years. On the twenty-eighth day of August, 1884, the Commissioners' Court made an order which was entered on its minutes, "that a special fund be established as the cash fund, which shall be set apart for the purpose of meeting any demands against the county that must necessarily be paid in cash;" and directed the clerk of that Court to issue four bonds upon the bridge fund for the sum of \$5000 each to run twenty years with 8 per cent. interest, to be sold and the funds transferred to the cash fund. In accordance with this direction, the clerk issued bonds Nos. 10, 11, 12, and 13, under the order of February 11, 1884, which were sold and the funds used as directed. It is contended by the county that the purchaser of these four bonds was required to take notice of the order directing the clerk to issue them and prescribing the disposition of the proceeds. But we consider the latter order as simply a direction to the officer of the county as to the manner in which the bonds should be disposed of and the funds applied; that it does not constitute the source of power or authority for issuing the bonds and the purchaser was not required to know the contents of that order. *DeVoss vs. City of Richmond*, 18 Gratt. 338.

But the facts are very different as to the other bonds in question. The order above quoted, which authorized the issue of bridge bonds, was exhausted by the issue of the bonds numbered from 1 to 20, each bond being for \$500; the twenty bonds make the full sum of \$10,000 authorized by that order. The bonds from 21 to 26 inclusive were issued under the subsequent orders of the Commissioners' Court, upon the face of which was expressed

a purpose to use the bonds in the liquidation of the court house debt and other debts contracted by the county. On February 13, 1885, the Court made an order that Martin, Byrne & Johnson be paid out of the bridge fund to be created by the sale of six bonds of \$500 each, which were to be delivered to William Martin to make sale of them and pay the note due to the firm, paying the balance into the treasury; under which order the six bonds numbered 21 to 26 inclusive were issued. On May 14, 1885, the Court made an order that bridge bonds be issued to Martin, Byrne & Johnson, for the balance due them on the court house, when the amount can be ascertained, and subsequently, on June 25 of the same year, the court made another order that the road and bridge bonds ordered to be issued at a previous term of this Court be issued and sold as directed in the minutes of that meeting. This evidently refers to the order of May 14, 1885, which directed that E. F. Swinney should sell the bonds. In the order of June 25, 1885, the Court directed that thirty bonds for \$500 each, being \$15,000, be issued and sold as the law directs, for the purpose of raising a fund to pay off and discharge the balance due to Martin, Byrne & Johnson, on the court house contract. Bridge bonds Nos. 34 to 37 inclusive, and 60 and 61, were issued under this order.

From this state of facts it is evident that any person desiring to know the authority by which the bonds in question were issued, and looking to the orders upon the minutes of the Court under which the issue was made, could not fail to see that the county commissioners had undertaken to evade the law by issuing road and bridge bonds for the purpose of constructing a court house. This they could not do by law, and the bonds if in the hands of Martin, Byrne & Johnson would undoubt-

edly be void. The only question with regard to these bonds is, was the defendant in error, or any other purchaser for value, without actual notice chargeable with a knowledge of the facts which might be ascertained by the exercise of proper diligence and inquiry in the examination of the orders under which the bonds in question were issued? We think that this question has been settled definitely by the decision of this Court in the case of Ball, Hutchins & Co. vs. Presidio County, 88 Tex. 60, in which Judge Denman, for the Court, used the following language: "It results from what has been said above that the law requires a dealer in county bonds to know the provisions of the act of the Legislature and the order of the County Commissioners' Court, under and by virtue of which such bonds were issued, whether referred to on the face of the bonds or not." As above stated, an examination of the orders under which and by virtue of which alone the bonds could have been issued, the purchaser would necessarily have learned that the bonds were issued for a purpose not authorized by law, and being so notified would have received them with only the rights of the original payee. Having failed to take the precaution to examine the order upon which the bonds were based, the purchaser was guilty of negligence and must be charged with notice of that which could have been learned in the exercise of ordinary care.

We, therefore, conclude that the bridge bonds from 21 to 26 inclusive, and 34 to 37 inclusive, and 60 and 61 were invalid, that the plaintiff below had no right to recover against Mitchel county upon the coupons representing interest upon such bonds, and that the trial court and Court of Civil Appeals erred in holding said bonds to be valid, and in rendering judgment upon such coupons. All other bonds involved in this cause are found to be valid obligations of Mitchel county.

It is ordered that the judgments of the District Court and Court of Civil Appeals be reversed and this cause be remanded to the District Court.

T. J. BROWN,  
*Associate Justice.*

Opinion delivered January 10, 1898.

CLERK'S OFFICE—SUPREME COURT.

I, Chas. S. Morse, Clerk of the Supreme Court of Texas, hereby certify that the above and foregoing twenty-five pages contain a true and correct copy of the opinion of the Supreme Court in cause No. 562, entitled County of Mitchel vs. City National Bank, Paducah, Kentucky.

Witness my hand and the seal of said court, this the thirty-first day of January, A. D. 1898.

(SEAL)

CHAS. S. MORSE, *Clerk.*

## S. B. 68.] CHAPTER XVIII.

## AN ACT

To authorize counties to issue bonds for bridge purposes and to levy a tax to pay the same; also to validate bonds heretofore issued for bridge purposes.

SECTION 1. *Be it Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Texas*, That the County Commissioners' Courts of the several counties of this State are hereby authorized and empowered to issue bonds of said county, with interest coupons attached, for such amounts as may be necessary for the purpose of buying or constructing bridges for public uses within such county, said bonds to run not exceeding twenty years and bear interest at any rate not to exceed 8 per cent. per annum.

SEC. 2. The Commissioners' Court shall levy an annual *ad valorem* tax, not to exceed fifteen cents on the one hundred dollars valuation, sufficient to pay the interest thereon, and create a sinking fund for the redemption of said bonds. The sinking fund herein provided for shall not be less than 4 per cent. on the full sum for which the bonds are issued.

SEC. 3. Said bonds shall never be sold at less than their face value, and the interest on the same shall be paid annually on the tenth day of April of each year, and they shall be registered, and an account kept by the county treasurer, of the amount of said bonds, and the principal and interest paid on each, in a well bound book for the purpose; provided, that no county shall issue a larger amount of bonds than a tax of 10 per cent. on the one hundred dollars valuation of property in the county will liquidate in ten years.

SEC. 4. Said bonds shall be signed by the county judge

and countersigned by the county clerk, and registered by the treasurer before they are delivered.

SEC. 5. Moneys in the hands of the county treasurer belonging to the sinking fund of any county shall be first applied to the payment of said bonds, or be invested in either bonds of that county, or other counties in the State, or in bonds of this State or United States; provided, in no case shall more than the face value be paid for the bonds above mentioned.

SEC. 6. All bonds heretofore issued for the purposes named in this bill are hereby validated; provided said bonds come within the limitations of the provisions of this bill.

SEC. 7. The near approach of the close of the session of the Legislature, and the importance of a law authorizing the issuance of bridge bonds, creates an emergency and a public necessity, that the constitutional rule requiring bills to be read on three several days be suspended, and that this act take effect and be in force from and after its passage, and it is so enacted.

I hereby certify that the within Senate bill No. 68, originated in the Senate and passed the same, January 13, 1884. Ayes 16, nays 11.

WM. NEAL RAMEY,  
*Secretary of the Senate.*

I hereby certify that the within Senate bill No. 68, passed the House of Representatives by four-fifths vote, February 2, 1884.

J. W. B. BOOTH,  
*Chief Clerk House of Representatives.*

NOTE.—The foregoing act was presented to the Governor of Texas for his approval on the fourth day of February, 1884, and was not signed by him or returned to the house in which it originated, with his objection

thereto, within the time prescribed by the Constitution,  
and therefore became a law without his signature.

J. W. BAINES,

*Secretary of State.*

*General Laws of Texas, 1884, p. 29.*



## CHAPTER 141.

H. S. S. B. No. 54.]

AN ACT

To authorize counties to buy, construct, or contract for the use of bridges, and to issue bonds and levy taxes to pay for the same, and to repeal all laws in conflict herewith.

SECTION 1. *Be it enacted by the Legislature of the State of Texas*, That the county Commissioners' Courts of the several counties of this State are hereby authorized and empowered to issue bonds of said county, with interest coupons attached, for such amounts as may be necessary, for the purpose of buying or constructing bridges for public uses within such county, said bonds to run not exceeding twenty years and bear interest at any rate not to exceed 8 per cent. per annum.

SEC. 2. The Commissioners' Courts shall levy an annual *ad valorem* tax, not to exceed fifteen cents on the one hundred dollars valuation, sufficient to pay the interest on and create a sinking fund for the redemption of said bonds. The sinking fund here provided shall not be less than 4 per cent. on the full sum for which the bonds are issued.

SEC. 3. Said bonds shall never be sold at less than their face value, and the interest of the same shall be paid annually on the tenth day of April of each year; and they shall be registered, and an account kept by the county treasurer of the amount of said bonds, and the principal and interest paid on each, in a well bound book for that purpose; *provided*, that no county already indebted shall issue a larger amount of bonds than a tax of ten cents on the one hundred dollars valuation of property in the county will liquidate in ten years; and the counties having no debts may issue such amount of bonds as a tax of ten cents on the one hundred dollars valuation of property in the county will liquidate in twenty years.

SEC. 4. Said bonds shall be signed by the county judge

and countersigned by the county clerk, and registered by the treasurer before they are delivered.

SEC. 5. Money in the hands of the county treasurer belonging to the sinking fund of any county shall be first applied to the payment of said bonds, or be invested in other bonds of that county or other counties in the State, or in bonds of this State or of the United States; *provided*, in no case shall more than the face value be paid for the bonds above mentioned.

SEC. 6. The Commissioners' Court of any county in this State may, when the cost of constructing a bridge over any bay or river in said county is two hundred and fifty thousand dollars or more, contract with any person, company or corporation for the right of the public to use such bridge, in such manner, upon such terms, and for such annual compensation as may be agreed upon by and between the owner or owners of such bridge and Commissioners' Court of the county where said bridge may be located; *provided*, no contract for the use of any such bridge shall be made for a longer time than twenty-five years. The Commissioners' Court shall levy a tax sufficient to pay the annual amount contracted for.

SEC. 7. All laws in conflict herewith be and the same are hereby repealed.

SEC. 8. The near approach of the close of the session of the Legislature, and the importance of a law authorizing the issuance of bridge bonds, creates an emergency and a public necessity exists that the constitutional rule requiring bills to be read on three several days be suspended, and that this act take effect and be in force from and after its passage, and it is so enacted.

(NOTE.—The foregoing act originated in the House and passed the same by a vote of 71 ayes, 19 nays, and passed the Senate by a two-thirds vote.)

Approved April 4, 1887.

*General Laws of Texas for 1887, page 135.*

# SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES

OCTOBER TERM, 1898.

No. 267.

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ALBERT WADE, PETITIONER,

*versus*

TRAVIS COUNTY, TEXAS.

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*On Writ of Certiorari to the United States Circuit  
Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit.*

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BRIEF ON BEHALF OF ALBERT WADE, PETITIONER.

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## I.—STATEMENT OF THE CASE.

This case comes before this Court by virtue of a writ of *certiorari* granted on the petition of Albert Wade and directed to the Circuit Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit. The petitioner was plaintiff in error in the Circuit Court of Appeals and plaintiff in the Circuit Court of the United States for the Western District of Texas, where his suit was originally brought. In the statement of the case we shall recite briefly so much of the proceedings in the trial court, in the appellate court and in this court as are necessary to be known in order to determine

the very limited range of questions, or rather the one question, now presented for decision.

The case was decided against plaintiff on a general demurrer, which admitted the facts alleged in his petition. The suit was brought on coupons detached from a certain issue of municipal bonds. The demurrer was based on the proposition that, by reason of certain constitutional and statutory laws of the State of Texas, it was essential to the validity of the issue of bonds and coupons in question that the municipal authority which issued the bonds, in this case a county commissioners' court, should have itself, at the time it authorized the issue, expressly provided for the levy and collection of a sufficient tax to pay the interest thereon and to provide a sinking fund of at least two per cent. The trial court and the appellate court, largely influenced, if not controlled, under the rule of comity in such cases, by the supposed construction of such laws by the State courts, adopted the theory of the law underlying the demurrer; and, as the petition did not allege a provision by the County Commissioner's Court for the levy and collection of a sufficient tax, etc., made contemporaneously with the contract under which the bonds were issued, the demurrer was sustained. The pleadings consisted of the petition and a general demurrer, with specifications. So much of the facts alleged in the petition, now material, are as follows:

That on July 3, 1888, the defendant county, represented by the duly constituted county authorities, and acting under and pursuant to an order of the Commissioners' Court of said county, entered into a contract with a certain bridge company for the construction of a county bridge in said county; that by the terms of the contract the bridge company agreed to construct the superstructure of an iron bridge over the Colorado river, the work to begin August 3, 1888, and to be completed on the 15th of November fol-

lowing, in consideration whereof the county agreed to pay the bridge company \$47,000 in negotiable bonds, payable in twenty years and bearing 6 per cent. interest, payment to be made in part as the work progressed and the balance on the completion and final acceptance of the bridge; that the forty-seven bonds, with coupons attached, payable to bearer, were duly executed by the defendant county and delivered to the bridge company as required by the contract; that Albert Wade, petitioner, became the owner, by purchase in open market, for valuable consideration and before maturity, of the coupons representing the interest due on all of said bonds on April 10, 1893, April 10, 1894, April 10, 1895, the dates of the coupons which had been detached from said forty-seven bonds; that due presentment and demand for the payment of said coupons were made to the proper county authorities, but payment thereof was refused, and the same are still due and unpaid.

The petition alleged in detail facts in respect to the taxable values of Travis county in the years in which the contract was made and the bonds issued, from which it appeared that the exercise of the taxing power within the constitutional limit would be sufficient to pay the interest accruing on the bonds and provide the sinking fund contemplated by the Constitution and the statute under which they were issued. The petition contained other allegations of fact which are not deemed now to be material. But it was not alleged or shown that on the day and at the time the contract for the construction of the bridge and the issuance of the bonds was made, the County Commissioners' Court, which made the contract and ordered and authorized the issuance of the bonds, either made or provided for the levy of a tax to pay the interest on the bonds or to provide a sinking fund for their ultimate redemption. The petition closed with a prayer for judgment for the full amount due on said coupons, to-wit:

the sum of \$8460 as principal, and interest at 6 per cent. per annum on each of said coupons from the dates that they respectively matured.

Defendant demurred generally to the petition on the ground that it stated no cause of action, and in specification thereof it said that the petition failed to allege that, at the time the debt was created, for which the bonds were issued, upon the coupons of which the suit was brought, any provision was made for the interest and, at least, 2 per cent. sinking fund upon said bonds.

The demurrer was sustained and, plaintiff declining to amend his petition, judgment was rendered in favor of defendant. The case was carried by writ of error to the Circuit Court of Appeals, which affirmed the judgment of the lower court.

The demurrer was based on the supposed application and requirements of Section 7 of Article 11 of the Constitution of the State of Texas, which reads as follows:

"SEC. 7. All counties and cities bordering on the coast of the Gulf of Mexico are hereby authorized, upon a vote of two-thirds of the taxpayers therein (to be ascertained as may be provided by law), to levy and collect such tax for construction of sea walls, breakwaters or sanitary purposes as may be authorized by law, and may create a debt for such work and issue bonds in evidence thereof. But no debt for any purpose shall ever be incurred in any manner by any city or county unless provision is made at the time of creating the same for levying and collecting a sufficient tax to pay the interest thereon, and provide at least 2 per cent. as a sinking fund; and the condemnation of the right of way for the erection of such works shall be fully provided for."

The contention in support of the demurrer which prevailed in the trial and in the appellate court was: *First*, that the clause in Sec. 7 requiring provision for payment at the time of creating the debt applied to all counties and cities, whether bordering on the coast of the Gulf of

Mexico or not; *second*, that the effect of the provision was to require the County Commissioners' Court, when contracting any debt, to provide at the same time, by its own order or resolution, for levying and collecting a sufficient tax to pay the interest and to provide at least 2 per cent. as a sinking fund, obedience to such requirements being essential to the validity of the debt; and *third*, that this section 7, with this meaning and effect, applied to contracts for county bridges and the issuance of bonds in payment thereof, notwithstanding the provision of Sec. 2, Art. 11, of the State Constitution, which provided that "the construction of jails, court-houses and bridges, and the establishing of county poorhouses and farms, and the laying out, construction and repairing of country roads, shall be provided for by general laws," and notwithstanding the provision of a statute of the State of Texas, passed in compliance with Sec. 2, Art. 11, of the Constitution, authorizing the issuance of bonds for county bridges and itself making provision for the levy and collection of a sufficient tax to pay the interest and to provide a sinking fund exceeding 2 per cent.

On the other hand, it was unsuccessfully argued and claimed on behalf of plaintiff, the present petitioner, *first*, that Sec. 7 of Art. 11 of the State Constitution did not apply to the defendant county, which was not a county bordering on the coast of the Gulf of Mexico, and *second*, that if said section was applicable, then the requirements of said section were fully complied with in and by the act of the Legislature under authority of which the bonds and coupons in question were issued, namely, Chapter 141 of the General Acts of the Legislature for the year 1887, entitled "An act to authorize counties to buy, construct or contract for the use of bridges, and to issue bonds and levy taxes to pay for the same, and to repeal all laws in conflict therewith;" Sec. 1 of which act authorizes and empowers the County Commissioner's



Court of the several counties of the State to issue bonds of the county, with interest coupons attached, for such amounts as may be necessary, for the purpose of buying or constructing bridges for public uses within such county, said bonds to run not exceeding twenty years and bear interest at any rate not to exceed 8 per cent. per annum, and Sec. 2 of which act provides that "the|Commissioners' Court shall levy an annual *ad valorem* tax, not to exceed fifteen cents on the \$100 valuation, sufficient to pay the interest on and create a sinking fund for the redemption of said bonds—the sinking fund herein provided for shall not be less than 4 per cent. on the full sum for which the bonds are issued;" that the provision made in Sec. 2 of said law for the payment of the interest and the creation of a sinking fund for the bonds contemplated therein entered into and formed part of any contract for the purchase or construction of any bridge and the issuance of bonds in payment thereof which any County Commissioners' Court might make under the authority of said law, and constituted a full compliance with the requirements of Sec. 7 of Art. 11 of the State Constitution, and rendered unnecessary any provision at the time of the contract by the County Commissioners' Court for the levy and collection of a sufficient tax to pay the interest and to provide a sinking fund of at least 2 per cent.

The opinions and decisions of the Circuit Court and of the Circuit Court of Appeals are included in the printed record of this case. The former is reported in 72 Fed. Rep., pp. 985 ffg., and the latter in 81 Fed. Rep., pp. 742 ffg.

By reference thereto it will be seen that the demurrer was sustained on the ground that the provisions of Sec. 7, Art. 11, of the State Constitution applied to the contract and bonds in question, and that, by reason thereof, it was essential to the validity of said bridge contract and bonds that the County Commissioners' Court, when it made the



contract and authorized the issuance of the bonds, should have, itself, at that time, expressly provided for the levy and collection of a sufficient tax to pay the interest thereon, and to provide a sinking fund of at least 2 per cent., and that, in the absence of a showing that the County Commissioners' Court did itself make special provision for levying and collecting such a tax at the time the bridge contract was entered into, the petition in the Court below failed to state a good cause of action.

It will also appear from the opinion and decision of the Circuit Court of Appeals that, in so doing, the Court considered that it was following, and was bound in comity, and by the custom and practice of the federal courts to follow, the jurisprudence of the Supreme Court of the State of Texas on the questions at issue. The rule which thus controlled its decision was embodied by the Court of Appeals in the syllabus or headnotes of its decision, as follows: "A decision of the highest court of a State construing a provision of the State Constitution, limiting the powers of counties and cities as to the creation of debts, is binding on the federal courts." As will be shown hereafter, the decisions of the Supreme Court of Texas, to which the Circuit Court of Appeals referred, and which it regarded as conclusive against the contention made on behalf of the plaintiff in error, were not cases involving the issuance of bonds for an indebtedness authorized by an act of the Legislature which itself made provision for a sufficient tax to pay interest and create a sinking fund of at least 2 per cent. Nevertheless, the Court of Appeals considered that the Supreme Court of the State had so construed Sec. 7 of Art. 11 of the Constitution as to make it applicable to the contract and bonds in question, and to make a contemporaneous provision by the County Commissioners' Court for levying and collecting a sufficient tax, etc., an essential condition to the validity of the bonds.

After the decision of this case by the Circuit Court of Appeals, and after the expiration of the time within which, under rules of that Court, an application for a rehearing will be entertained, the Supreme Court of Texas decided the case of *County of Mitchel vs. City National Bank of Paducah, Ky.*, reported in 43 South-western Reporter, 880. In that case there were presented to the Supreme Court of Texas for decision the identical questions involved in petitioner's case, namely, whether or not the provisions of Sec. 7 of Art. 11 of the Constitution of Texas was applicable to counties not bordering on the coast of the Gulf of Mexico, and, if so, whether or not, in case of a debt created for bridge purposes and of bonds issued in evidence or payment thereof, under authority of a statute making provision for a sufficient tax to pay the interest and create a sinking fund, it was necessary for the County Commissioners' Court itself to provide at the time for the levy and collection of a sufficient tax, etc. A reference to the opinion in the Mitchel county case will show that the Court decided that whether or not Sec. 7 of Art. 11 of the Constitution of Texas was applicable to counties not bordering on the gulf coast was an open question, which it was not then necessary to decide; that, assuming said constitutional provision to apply to all counties in the State, wherever situated, it was in the power of the Legislature to make for cities and counties the provision for a sufficient tax, etc., required by Sec. 7; and that an act of the Legislature which, like Sec. 2 of the act of 1887, quoted above, provided that the Commissioners' Court should levy a certain annual tax sufficient to pay the interest and provide a sinking fund for the redemption of the bonds therein authorized to be issued, constituted such a "provision" for a sufficient tax as fully met the requirements of the constitutional provision in question and rendered unnecessary to the validity of the bonds authorized by

the act that the Commissioners' Court should make any provision for levying any tax at the time of making the contract or issuing the bonds.

Soon after the decision by the Supreme Court of Texas of the Mitchel county case petitioner filed in this Court his petition for a writ of *certiorari*. The petition set forth the foregoing facts and other circumstances, not necessary now to mention, in support of its application, and your Honors directed the writ to be issued.

## II.—ARGUMENT.

We shall first address ourselves to the easy task of showing that the construction of the Constitution and statutes of the State of Texas, announced by the Circuit Court of Appeals in this case, is directly opposed to the construction of the same constitutional and statutory law by the Supreme Court of Texas; in other words, that, under the law as announced by the Supreme Court of Texas, it was error to sustain the demurrer to the petition. We shall then very briefly discuss the two opposing views of the law, evidenced by the opinion of the Circuit Court of Appeals in this case and by the opinion of the Supreme Court of Texas, in the Mitchel county case. The discussion will be very brief, first, because we believe that this Court will follow the decision of the Supreme Court of Texas, in accordance with the rule laid down by the Court of Appeals, itself, in this case, that "a decision of the highest court of a State construing a provision of the State Constitution, limiting the powers of counties and cities as to creation of debts, is binding on the Federal courts;" and, second, because, in our judgment, the reasoning and authorities contained in the opinion in the Mitchel county case are sufficient to secure the acceptance of the conclusions reached by the Supreme Court of Texas, if your Honors should consider that the

rule of comity above referred to ought not to be controlling in this case.

The identity of the legal questions presented and the contrariety of the conclusions reached in this case and in the Mitchel county case will at once appear from a simple reading of the opinions in the two cases; but for the convenience of the Court we shall now briefly compare the two decisions.

In the Mitchel county case one of the bond issues, the validity of which was contested, was one of bonds issued under the authority of the Commissioners' Court of Mitchel county in payment for a county bridge. The authority for the action of the county officials was an act entitled "An act to authorize counties to issue bonds for bridge purposes and to levy a tax to pay the same," being Chapter 18 of the general laws of 1884. Sections 1 and 2 of this act are as follows:

"SECTION 1. *Be it enacted by the Legislature of the State of Texas*, That the County Commissioners' Courts of the several counties of this State are hereby authorized and empowered to issue bonds of said county, with interest coupons attached, for such amounts as may be necessary for the purpose of buying or constructing bridges for public uses within such county, said bonds to run not exceeding twenty years and bear interest at any rate not to exceed 8 per cent. per annum.

"SEC. 2. The Commissioners' Court shall levy an annual *ad valorem* tax not to exceed fifteen cents on the one hundred dollars valuation, sufficient to pay the interest thereon, and create a sinking fund for the redemption of said bonds. The sinking fund herein provided for shall not be less than 4 per cent. on the full sum for which the bonds are issued."

This act, as stated by the Supreme Court in its decision, was enacted in pursuance of Sec. 2 of Art. 11 of the Constitution of Texas, which provides: "The construction of jails, court houses and bridges, and the establishment

of county poorhouses and farms, and the laying out, construction and repairing of county roads, shall be provided for by general laws."

In the present case the bonds in question were issued, in payment for a county bridge, under the authority of the County Commissioners' Court of Travis county, whose power to act was derived from an act entitled "An act to authorize counties to buy, construct, or contract for the use of bridges, and to issue bonds and levy taxes to pay for the same, and to repeal all laws in conflict herewith," being chapter 141 of the general laws of 1887. Secs. 1 and 2 of this act are identical with the corresponding sections of the act of 1884, and read as follows:

"SECTION 1. *Be it enacted by the Legislature of the State of Texas*, That the County Commissioners' Courts of the several counties of this State are hereby authorized and empowered to issue bonds of said county, with interest coupons attached, for such amounts as may be necessary for the purpose of buying or constructing bridges for public uses within such county, said bonds to run not exceeding twenty years, and bear interest at any rate not to exceed 8 per cent. per annum.

"SEC. 2. The Commissioners' Court shall levy an annual *ad valorem* tax, not to exceed 15 cents on the \$100 valuation, sufficient to pay the interest thereon, and create a sinking fund for the redemption of said bonds. The sinking fund herein provided for shall not be less than 4 per cent. on the full sum for which the bonds are issued."

This act, like the act of 1884, which it superseded, was passed in compliances with the requirements of Sec. 2 of Art. 11 of the Constitution quoted above. The two acts are printed in full in the appendix of this brief.

It appears from the decision of the Court in the Mitchell county case that the Commissioners' Court, at the time the bonds in question were issued or the contract calling for them was made, did not make any provision for levying

and collecting a sufficient tax to pay the interest thereof and to provide a sinking fund of at least 2 per cent. It appears from the pleadings and the decision of the Court in the present case that the Commissioners' Court likewise failed to make provision for levying and collecting a sufficient tax, etc., at the time the contract was made and the issue of the bonds ordered. And in both cases the defence was that the omission of the Commissioners' Court to make such provision operated the nullity of the bond issues, because in violation of the mandate contained in Sec. 7 of Art. 11 of the State Constitution.

In neither case was the fact disputed, that, considering the taxable values of the county in the year in which the bonds in question were issued, the exercise of the taxing power within the constitutional limit would be sufficient to pay the interest accruing on the bonds and to provide the sinking fund required by the Constitution and the statute under which they were issued.

Coming to the conclusions of law announced by the two courts, we find that the Circuit Court of Appeals considered that the question of whether the requirements of Sec. 7 of Art. 11 of the State Constitution applied to all cities and counties, whether bordering on the gulf coast or not, had been settled, and that they applied to all municipal corporations wherever situated; but that the Supreme Court of Texas declared that whether that section applied to such bonds as were then in suit was an open question, the decision of which was not necessary in the case before the Court. Section 7 of Art. 11 is as follows: "All counties and cities bordering on the coast of the Gulf of Mexico are hereby authorized upon a vote of two-thirds of the taxpayers therein (to be ascertained as may be provided by law) to levy and collect such tax for construction of sea walls, breakwaters, or sanitary purposes as may be authorized by law, and may create a debt for such works and issue bonds in evidence thereof. But no debt for any



purpose shall ever be incurred in any manner by any city or county, unless provision is made at the time of creating the same for levying and collecting a sufficient tax to pay the interest thereon and provide at least 2 per cent. as a sinking fund; and the condemnation of the right-of-way for the erection of such works shall be fully provided for."

The Supreme Court of Texas assumed, for the purposes of the Mitchel county case, that the above quoted article was applicable to the indebtedness then in question, and we shall make a like assumption in the argument of this case. Applying Sec. 7, Art. 11, to petitioner's case, the Circuit Court of Appeals held that it was essential to the validity of the bridge contract and of the bonds sued on that the County Commissioners' Court, when it made the contracts and authorized the issuance of the bonds, should have itself, at that time, expressly provided for the levy and collection of a sufficient tax to pay the interest thereon and to provide a sinking fund of at least 2 per cent., and that, as the petition of plaintiff in the court below failed to show that the County Commissioners' Court did make such special contemporaneous provision for a sufficient tax, etc., no cause of action had been stated and the general demurrer must be sustained. The court passed over, *sub silentio*, the effect of the special circumstance that the bonds had been issued under authority of the act of 1887, and thus held, in effect, that the requirements of Sec. 7 had not or could not be met by legislative provision for the levying and collection of a sufficient tax.

On the other hand, the Supreme Court of Texas, addressing itself to the identical questions, said: "It was not the purpose of the convention, in adopting the foregoing articles, to require that a city or county should at the time of creating a debt ascertain the rate per cent. required to be levied upon the taxable values of the county, in order to raise a sufficient sum to pay the inter-

est and provide a sinking fund upon that debt, and to actually levy that rate at the time." After citing authorities in support of this proposition, the Court goes on to say: "What the Constitution requires is that provision shall be made at the time, or shall have been previously made, by which the rate of tax to be levied is so definitely fixed—as was done in the case last cited—that it becomes merely a ministerial act to determine the rate to be levied. The Legislature has the power to make all such 'provision' for counties and cities, or it may leave it to the officers of such corporations to make it, when the debt is created; if made by either it is sufficient. Mitchel county has not provided for the collection of such tax, and the solution of the question now before us depends upon whether the laws under which the bonds were issued made such provisions as the Constitution required. On behalf of Mitchel county it is urged that by the terms of Sec. 7, Art. 11, of the Constitution the 'provision' which is required to be made for levying and collecting taxes with which to pay the interest and create a sinking fund upon the indebtedness of a county must be made by the officers of the county *at the time* the debt is incurred, and that the source of authority for making the levy and collecting the tax is the Constitution, and not the act of the Legislature." The Court then discusses Sec. 7, in connection with other provisions of the Constitution, and reaches the conclusion that it "contains no grant of authority to levy a tax nor designation of any official by whom the tax specified is to be levied and collected, but is in effect a limitation upon the power of the Legislature to authorize such corporations to create debts." After citing some authorities on the interpretation of constitutions, the Court declares: "It is quite too plain for argument that if the laws of 1881 and 1884 or similar laws had never been passed, Mitchel county would have had no authority under the Constitu-



tion to contract the debts represented by the bonds nor to levy a tax for the payment of the interest and sinking fund on such debt; the power to do so could be derived from the Legislature only. If the Legislature had the power to grant authority to the county to make such provision, then that department could exercise the power itself. If the terms of the law are such that where the county has issued its bonds in compliance with it, the bondholder might resort to a Court and by *mandamus* compel the county to levy tax sufficient to pay the interest annually and to raise a sinking fund of not less than 2 per cent., then the provision would be sufficient under the Constitution. Whether less certain directions might meet the demands of the Constitution is not before us. This brings us to the consideration of the question, were the requirements of the statutes under which these bonds were issued so explicit as to constitute a compliance with the mandate of the Constitution?"

One of the Bond issues, the validity of which was questioned in the Mitchel county case, was an issue of bonds for court-house and jail purposes. The authority for such bonds was a statute passed in 1881. Unlike the act of 1884 and the act of 1887 (under which petitioner's bonds were issued), the act of 1881, while requiring the levy of a sufficient tax to pay the interest and create a sinking fund, did not specify the per cent. of sinking fund. The Court considered at length the question whether such a law met the constitutional requirement, and concluded that it did, inasmuch as the act must be read in connection and harmonized with the mandate of the Constitution, that a sinking fund of at least 2 per cent. must be provided for. As the acts of 1884 and 1887 provided for a sinking fund of 4 per cent., the sufficiency of such a provision to meet the mandate of the Constitution was considered manifest. After quoting from the acts of 1881 and 1884 it was said:

"The statutes quoted above were enacted by the Legislature in view of the requirements of Secs. 2 and 7, Art. II, of the Constitution, and with the evident purpose of giving effect to the terms of those sections. As we have said before, the Legislature might have empowered the Commissioners' Court to provide for collecting the tax required by the Constitution, but it pursued, as we think, the wiser course of making the necessary provision by a general law, which applied to and governed the issuance of all bonds for the given purpose, whereby the taxpayer and the bondholder would be alike protected and uniformity secured."

The Court discussed at length, upon principle and authority, the question whether the legislative provisions in the two acts were sufficient to satisfy the constitutional requirement, and held that it was. "It therefore follows," said the Court, "that it was a legal duty resting upon that court (the Commissioners' Court), after issuing and selling the bonds under the authority given in the first section of each article, to annually levy and collect the tax necessary to raise the interest and sinking fund not less than the minimum expressed in each law and the District Court had the authority to enforce the performance of that duty by writ of mandamus, but would not control the discretion vested in the Commissioners' Court to levy and collect a tax which would provide for a sinking fund greater than 2 per cent. We think it manifest that there was no act involved in the performance of the duty enjoined by Sec. 2 of each of the acts which required the exercise of any discretion on the part of the Commissioners' Court, but that having determined the questions upon which the issuing of the bonds depended, there remained nothing to be done but to perform the ministerial act of ascertaining the sum to be collected and the rate per cent. necessary to be levied upon the taxable values of the county each year and that

the performance of this duty the District Court had the authority to enforce by a writ of mandamus."

We have no concern with the other questions discussed by the Court arising out of certain irregularities in the issuance of the bonds in question, *e. g.*, loaning courthouse bonds to the bridge fund, etc. Suffice it to say that upon the principles and reasoning, sufficiently indicated by the above quotations from the opinion, the bridge bonds in question were declared to be valid obligations of the county.

We submit that no argument is necessary to show the legal identity of the facts and issues involved in the two cases and the contrariety of the conclusions reached by the two courts.

The remaining question is, whether this Court will adopt and apply to this case the conclusions of the Supreme Court of the State of Texas, or the contrary conclusions of the United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit. If the views of the Supreme Court of Texas prevail, the right of petitioner to the relief he seeks here will not be questioned. For if it be true, as declared by the Supreme Court of Texas, that it is not necessary for the provision required by the Constitution for interest and sinking fund of county bonds to be made by the Commissioners' Court, that the legislative provision is an execution of the constitutional mandate, that when the Commissioners' Court has created the debt and failed to levy the tax it does not affect the validity of the obligation, but the necessary levy may be compelled by mandamus, it follows, of course, that the demurrer to plaintiff's petition was not well founded in law, and that it was error to sustain it.

It does not now require argument or citation of authority to show the existence or propriety of the rule which has always been observed in this Court, that, in questions involving the construction or interpretation of the Constitution or statutes of a State, the decision of the highest

court of the State should be accepted and followed by the federal courts. Especially is this rule applicable to laws and controversies thereunder affecting political subdivisions of the State, limitations upon their powers, regulations in regard to the creation of debts by them, etc., all matters of purely internal concern and domestic policy. It can not be said, in opposition to the application of the rule in the present case, that there has been vacillation and uncertainty in the jurisprudence of the State, and that private rights which have grown up under one construction of the law will be sacrificed by a contrary construction. No case prior to the Mitchel county case has been cited, and we believe no case can be cited, where the question of the effect of a legislative provision for the levy and collection of a sufficient tax, etc., such as is made in the act of 1887, under which petitioner's bonds were issued, was presented or considered, or where the State Court has pronounced against the validity of county bonds, issued for the special purposes and under the special authority covered by Sec. 2 of Art. 11 of the Constitution, and the legislation passed in compliance therewith, because of the failure of the Commissioner's Court to make provision for interest and sinking fund when it authorized the issuance of the bonds. It will hardly be contended that a construction of the law tending to make municipal corporations pay their honest debts, evidenced by negotiable instruments in the hands of innocent third persons, is objectionable because of any possible injurious effect upon private rights.

For the foregoing reasons, which we do not deem it necessary in this Court to support by extended argument, we submit that your Honors should follow the construction of the Constitution and statutes of the State of Texas, laid down by the Supreme Court of the State, even if your Honors are of the opinion that you might have

reached a different conclusion in the exercise of an independent judgment. But should the Court consider that the rule which we have invoked ought not to be controlling in this case, then we submit that, without reference thereto, the petitioner is entitled to the relief prayed for, because the Supreme Court of Texas was right, and the Circuit Court of Appeals wrong, in the construction respectively given by the two courts to the constitutional and statutory provisions in question.

In regard to this last proposition we are willing to rest our case upon the reasoning and authorities contained in the Mitchel county case. The opinion in that case is self-supporting. We shall, however, very briefly refer to the authorities cited in the opinion of the Circuit Court of Appeals in order to show that they do not touch the points upon which we rely for the reversal of the decision of that court. The decision in the case of Quaker City National Bank vs. Nolan County (C. C. A.), 66 F. R. 88, was very brief. The Court simply held that the Supreme Court of the State had decided that Sec. 7 of Art. 11 was applicable, and, hence, that the failure of the Commissioners' Court to itself make contemporaneous provisions for the levy of a tax was fatal to the validity of the bonds. In Millsaps vs. City of Terrell (C. C. A.), 60 F. R. 193, the Court decided that the bonds sued on were invalid because issued at a time when the city had already levied taxes to the full limit prescribed by the Constitution and pledged the same to other indebtedness, and, therefore, it was a legal impossibility to comply with the requirements of Secs. 5 and 7, Art. 11, in respect to the later bonds. Francis vs. Howard County (C. C. A.), 54 F. R. 487, was a case involving simply an overissue of bonds. The case of Terrell vs. Dessaint, 71 Tex. 770 (9 S. W. 593), was one brought on a promissory note of the city of Terrell, for \$2000, payable in two years, which contained the recital that it was given in payment for material for

waterworks supplies, and was payable out of the tax of  $\frac{1}{4}$  per cent. collected annually for general purposes. The note represented part of the purchase price of certain material for the extension of the waterworks of the city. As there was no contemporaneous provision made by the municipal corporation, and no previous legislative provision for the payment of this debt, and as it was not a debt for current expenses, recovery upon the note was denied. There is nothing in *Terrell vs. Dessaint*, or in *Nolan County vs. State*, 83 Tex. 183 (17 S. W. R. 823), which militates in any way against the contention made in support of the present application. In respect to each of these cases it may be truly said that the crucial question in this case, the sufficiency of a legislative provision for the levying of a tax as a compliance with the mandate of the Constitution, was either not involved or not presented, considered or decided.

To deny petitioner the relief he now seeks this court must give a construction to the Constitution and statutes of Texas diametrically opposed to the construction placed upon them by the Supreme Court of the State. The result will be inconsistent and antagonistic decisions by the State and Federal courts in Texas respecting the validity of municipal bond issues, and the practical closing of the Federal courts to the holders of the large number of county bonds issued under the same circumstances as were petitioner's bonds. We submit that the rule under which the Federal courts follow the State courts in such matters, and the principles and authorities upon which the Supreme Court of Texas has supported its decision in the *Mitchel county* case, are sufficient, separately and together, to secure from your Honors a decree in favor of petitioner which will correct the error of which he complains and harmonize the jurisprudence of the State and Federal courts in Texas on a question of such importance



as the powers and limitations of counties in respect to issuance of negotiable bonds.

We therefore ask that your Honors do quash and reverse the judgment and decree of the Circuit Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit and do render a judgment reversing and setting aside the judgment of the United States Circuit Court for the Western District of Texas, brought up for review in said Court of Appeals by writ of error, and remanding the cause for further proceedings in accordance with the opinion and judgment of this Court.

Respectfully submitted,

FRANK W. HACKETT,

JOSEPH PAXTON BLAIR,

*Counsel for Albert Wade, Petitioner.*

## APPENDIX.

S. B. 68.]

### CHAPTER XVIII.

#### AN ACT

To authorize counties to issue bonds for bridge purposes and to levy a tax to pay the same; also to validate bonds heretofore issued for bridge purposes.

SECTION 1. *Be it enacted by the Legislature of the State of Texas,* That the County Commissioners' Courts of the several counties of this State are hereby authorized and empowered to issue bonds of said county, with interest coupons attached, for such amounts as may be necessary for the purpose of buying or constructing bridges for public uses within such county, said bonds to run not exceeding twenty years and bear interest at any rate not to exceed 8 per cent. per annum.

SEC. 2. The Commissioners' Court shall levy an annual *ad valorem* tax, not to exceed fifteen cents on the \$100 valuation, sufficient to pay the interest thereon and create a sinking fund for the redemption of said bonds. The sinking fund herein provided for shall not be less than 4 per cent. on the full sum for which the bonds are issued.

SEC. 3. Said bonds shall never be sold at less than their face value, and the interest on the same shall be paid annually on the tenth day of April of each year, and they shall be registered and an account kept by the county treasurer of the amount of said bonds, and the principal and interest paid on each, in a well-bound book for the purpose; provided, that no county shall issue a larger amount of bonds than a tax of 10 per cent. on the \$100 valuation of property in the county will liquidate in ten years.

SEC. 4. Said bonds shall be signed by the county judge



and countersigned by the county clerk, and registered by the treasurer before they are delivered.

SEC. 5. Moneys in the hands of the county treasurer belonging to the sinking fund of any county shall be first applied to the payment of said bonds, or be invested in either bonds of that county, or other counties in the State, or in bonds of this State or the United States; provided, in no case shall more than the face value be paid for the bonds above mentioned.

SEC. 6. All bonds heretofore issued for the purposes named in this bill are hereby validated; provided said bonds come within the limitation of the provisions of this bill.

SEC. 7. The near approach of the close of the session of the Legislature, and the importance of a law authorizing the issuance of bridge bonds, creates an emergency and a public necessity, that the constitutional rule requiring bills to be read on three several days be suspended, and that this act take effect and be in force from and after its passage, and it is so enacted.

I hereby certify that the within Senate bill No. 68 originated in the Senate and passed the same, January 13, 1884. Ayes 16, nays 11.

WM. NEAL RAMEY,  
*Secretary of the Senate.*

I hereby certify that the within Senate bill No. 68 passed the House of Representatives by four-fifths vote, February 2, 1884.

J. B. W. BOOTH,  
*Chief Clerk House of Representatives.*

NOTE.—The foregoing act was presented to the Governor of Texas for his approval on the fourth day of February, 1884, and was not signed by him or returned to the house in which it originated, with his objection

thereto, within the time prescribed by the Constitution,  
and therefore became a law without his signature.

J. W. BAINES,  
*Secretary of State.*

*General Laws of Texas, 1884, p. 29.*

## CHAPTER 141.

H. S. S. B. No. 54.]

### AN ACT

To authorize counties to buy, construct, or contract for the use of bridges, and to issue bonds and levy taxes to pay for the same, and to repeal all laws in conflict herewith.

SECTION 1. *Be it enacted by the Legislature of the State of Texas,* That the County Commissioners' Courts of the several counties of this State are hereby authorized and empowered to issue bonds of said county, with interest coupons attached, for such amounts as may be necessary, for the purpose of buying or constructing bridges for public uses within such county, said bonds to run not exceeding twenty years and bear interest at any rate not to exceed 8 per cent. per annum.

SEC. 2. The Commissioners' Court shall levy an annual *ad valorem* tax, not to exceed fifteen cents on the one hundred dollars valuation, sufficient to pay the interest on and create a sinking fund for the redemption of said bonds. The sinking fund here provided shall not be less than 4 per cent. on the full sum for which the bonds are issued.

SEC. 3. Said bonds shall never be sold at less than their face value, and the interest of the same shall be paid annually on the tenth day of April of each year; and they shall be registered, and an account kept by the county treasurer of the amount of said bonds, and the principal and interest paid on each, in a well bound book for that purpose; *provided*, that no county already indebted shall issue a larger amount of bonds than a tax of ten cents on the one hundred dollars valuation of property in the county will liquidate in ten years; and the counties having no debts may issue such amount of bonds as a tax of ten cents on the one hundred dollars valuation of property in the county will liquidate in twenty years.

SEC. 4. Said bonds shall be signed by the county judge

and countersigned by the county clerk, and registered by the treasurer before they are delivered.

SEC. 5. Money in the hands of the county treasurer belonging to the sinking fund of any county shall be first applied to the payment of said bonds, or be invested in other bonds of that county or other counties in the State, or in bonds of this State or of the United States; *provided*, in no case shall more than the face value be paid for the bonds above mentioned.

SEC. 6. The Commissioners' Court of any county in this State may, when the cost of constructing a bridge over any bay or river in said county is \$250,000 or more, contract with any person, company or corporation for the right of the public to use such bridge, in such manner, upon such terms, and for such annual compensation as may be agreed upon by and between the owner or owners of such bridge and Commissioners' Court of the county where said bridge may be located; *provided*, no contract for the use of any such bridge shall be made for a longer time than twenty-five years. The Commissioners' Court shall levy a tax sufficient to pay the annual amount contracted for.

SEC. 7. All laws in conflict herewith be and the same are hereby repealed.

SEC. 8. The near approach of the close of the session of the Legislature, and the importance of a law authorizing the issuance of the bridge bonds, creates an emergency and a public necessity exists that the constitutional rule requiring bills to be read on three several days be suspended, and that this act take effect and be in force from and after its passage, and it is so enacted.

(NOTE.—The foregoing act originated in the House and passed the same by vote of 71 yeas, 19 nays, and passed the Senate by a two-thirds vote.)

Approved April 4, 1887.

*General Laws of Texas for 1887, page 135.*



# Supreme Court of the United States.

OCTOBER TERM, 1898.

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ALBERT WADE, <i>Petitioner</i> ,	} No. 267.
<i>vs.</i>	
TRAVIS COUNTY, TEXAS.	

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## SUPPLEMENTARY BRIEF FOR PETITIONER.

### STATEMENT OF FACT.

It may serve a useful purpose to state the facts once more, specifying with more particularity than in our opening brief the several grounds of demurrer relied on by Travis County, and our respective replies thereto.

In 1888 the County of Travis, Texas (in which is the City of Austin, the capital), entered into a contract through its proper authorities for the building of a bridge. This bridge was built, and is a permanent improvement in the County. The proper authorities of the County contracted to pay therefor to the bridge builders \$47,000, in bonds of the County, bearing six per cent. interest, and payable in twenty years from date. Five bonds of \$1,000 each were executed and delivered by the County to the Company, in part payment, on December 6, 1888. December 22, the County delivered ten bonds; and on February 12, 1889, ten more bonds, making \$25,000 bonds in all. On 3d July, 1889, the County delivered the remaining bonds, numbered from 26 to 47, to the Bridge Company. All the bonds were in due form, and signed by the proper officers. The Company sold them in the market.

The petitioner is the legal owner and holder of the coupons due on all the bonds upon the respective dates of April 10th, in the years 1893, 1894 and 1895. Each coupon, excepting the first, save in number and date of maturity, is in words and figures as follows :

" \$60.	Due April 10, 18...	No....
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"The County of Travis will pay to bearer, at the treasury of the County of Travis, sixty dollars, on April 10th, 1895, being interest for one year on bond No...."

(The signatures of the County Judge and the County Clerk follow.)

The County paid the interest regularly until the 10th of April, 1893, on which date, and ever since, the County has refused to redeem its coupons.

The petitioner, Albert Wade, a citizen of Illinois, brought suit upon his coupons, in the Circuit Court of the United States for the western district of Texas, on the 18th of January, 1896. The amended petition will be found at pages 5-12 of the record.

The petition sets out the fact of the building of the bridge, and recites the contract in an exhibit. It alleges that prior to making the contract, the defendant at a regular term of the Commissioners' Court, levied taxes for the year 1888, and for subsequent years as required by law, a proportion of which were for road and bridge purposes. The petition in terms declares that the requirements of the law were followed in regard to the levying of the taxes for the payment of the interest and principal of these bonds; and that an amount unappropriated for other purposes was sufficient to pay the interest, and the sinking fund on the bonds; that the tax levied was ordered at the regular term of the court; and that the tax orders and levies, upon a delivery of said bonds, had become part of the contract of the County.

The petitioner avers he purchased the coupons for a full



and valuable consideration in open market, and that he is the legal owner and holder of the same. Other exhibits to the petition set forth the action of the Commissioners' Court at various dates with reference to levying a tax for road and bridge purposes, and for the creation of a sinking fund for the payment of bridge bonds.

The County demurred, setting up six grounds of demurrer (Rec., 13).

The first ground is that the petition fails to allege that at the time the debt was created for which the bonds were issued, upon the coupons of which this suit is brought, any provision was made for the interest and at least two per cent. sinking fund upon said bonds. This first specification of demurrer will be found to prove the turning point of the case.

The District Judge, MAXEY, was of opinion that the bonds were illegal, because their issue was not in accordance with the requirement of the Constitution—that "no debt for any purpose shall ever be incurred in any manner by a county, unless provision is made at the time of creating the same for levying and collecting a sufficient tax for the interest and sinking fund above specified." (Rec., 3.) This view was sustained by the Circuit Court of Appeals. The opinion of NEWMAN, District Judge of that Court (Rec., 18-20), is based upon an interpretation of the following words in sect. 7 of the Constitution: "No debt for any purpose shall ever be incurred in any manner by any city or county unless provision is made at the time of creating the same for levying and collecting a sufficient tax to pay the interest thereon and provide at least two per cent. as the sinking fund; and the condemnation of the right of way for the erection of such works shall be fully provided for."

In explanation of the language "erection of such works" it is to be said that sect. 7 had been adopted by the Constitutional Convention immediately after a great hurricane



had swept over the Gulf coast, submerging a part of the city of Galveston, and causing great destruction of life and property. (Rec., 19.)

Section 7 begins as follows: "All counties and cities bordering on the coast of the Gulf of Mexico are hereby authorized upon a vote of two-thirds of the tax payers therein (to be ascertained as may be provided by law) to levy and collect such tax for construction of sea-walls, break-waters or sanitary purposes as may be authorized by law, and may create a debt for such work and issue bonds in evidence thereof." Then follow the restrictive words above quoted.

The petitioner contended that sect. 7 applied only to cities and counties upon the Gulf coast. The Supreme Court of Texas has not as yet determined whether the restriction of this section applies to all the counties of the State, though there have been intimations and *obiter* expressions by the Court to the effect that it does so apply. In disposing of the present case, it will be unnecessary, we think, to determine whether the language of the section is to be taken as of general application, or should be restricted (as it would more reasonably appear to be the intention), to cities and counties bordering upon the Gulf of Mexico.

A preliminary enquiry arose in the Circuit Court as to the qualification of the District Judge to sit, he having been at the time a resident and citizen of Travis County, and a taxpayer there. This question, however, may be treated as having been dropped from the case.

The opinion of the Circuit Court of Appeals (NEWMAN, J.) is to the effect that the constitutional requirement just mentioned, of making provision at the time of creating the debt for levying and collecting a sufficient tax to pay the interest thereon, and provide at least two per cent. as a sinking fund, was not complied with in the present case; and for that reason the bonds were illegal. The opinion was filed 16th June, 1897. (Rec., 18.)

The vital question as to the meaning of the requirement

of the Constitution in respect to providing for collecting a tax, etc., we have contended was made the subject of a careful and thorough examination by the Supreme Court of Texas in *County of Mitchel v. City National Bank of Paducah*. The opinion delivered January 10, 1898, sustained the bonds, which were bridge bonds issued under circumstances nearly identical with those in suit. The ground for sustaining the bonds may be stated in a word as follows: Admitting that section 7 of the Constitution applies to an interior county, the requirement that provision shall be made for collecting a tax, etc., is met by the legislative enactment of 1884, entitled an "Act to authorize counties to buy, construct or contract for the use of bridges and to issue bonds and levy taxes to pay for the same, and to repeal all laws in conflict therewith." This act provided that the Commissioners' Court should levy a certain annual tax sufficient to pay the interest, and provide a sinking fund for the redemption of the bonds. The Supreme Court of Texas has determined that the passage of this act has constituted such a "provision" in this respect for a tax as answers fully the requirements of the Constitution; and that it was therefore unnecessary that the Commissioners' Court should have made provision for levying a tax at the time of making the contract or issuing the bonds, by an actual order to that effect.

The second specification of demurrer (Rec., 13) is that the petition "fails to allege that at any time any legal provision was made to raise a fund sufficient for the interest and sinking fund of such bonds."

The only perceptible difference between this and the former ground of demurrer is, that the latter denies that *at any time* a provision was made. The decision of the Supreme Court in the Mitchel County case disposes of this objection.

The third ground of demurrer is "that the tax levy of February 23, 1888, was not in contemplation of law any tax

levy, because such attempted levy was not made at a regular term of the Court (Rec., 13).

To this it may be replied that the petition in its third section distinctly states that the County at a regular term of said Court, 23d February, 1888, levied taxes, etc. This statement of a fact in the petition must be taken as true, for a demurrer cannot raise an issue of fact.\*

The fourth cause of demurrer is equally technical: "The fifth paragraph of the petition and other parts of said petition setting up that taxes were levied for the purpose, and the levies did make provision to pay the interest on said bonds, are insufficient, in this, that they do not set out and do not purport that said purpose or provisions were predicated on any order or resolution to that effect entered on the minutes of the Commissioners' Court" (Rec., 13).

It is enough, we submit, in an action of this nature by an innocent purchaser upon the bonds or coupons of a county, to set forth that the act was performed by the proper authorities, without going further and alleging that orders or resolutions to that effect were entered on the minutes. In other words, an omission to enter upon the minutes an order by the authorities competent to act, is of no consequence, provided the fact remains that the duty referred to was actually performed, to wit, the making of the levy.

The fifth cause of demurrer is that a certain paragraph of the plaintiff's petition, and the exhibit relating thereto, ought to be stricken out, because neither the allegations in the paragraph nor the exhibit show that the bonds in question in this suit were in any wise connected with said order, nor do the allegations of the paragraph refer to the bonds here in issue (Rec., 13).

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\* Should it become material, the Court are advised, that so far as bonds Nos. 16 to 25 are concerned, the fact is clearly set forth in the petition, and cannot be gainsaid, that the Commissioners' Court sat at its regular term, Feb. 12, 1889, and adjourned over to Feb. 13th; and that the issuance of these particular bonds, and the order for levying tax, to create a sinking fund and to pay interest on bridge bonds were contemporaneous.

This is not of sufficient consequence to require discussion.

The sixth ground of demurrer is similar to the fifth. The paragraph reads as follows: "That part of the petition is insufficient which alleges that the Commissioners' Court had in contemplation and intended when the taxes were levied to build the bridge in question, because it is not shown that any order evincing such intention was made on the minutes, or in any other way, and because the petition itself avers that no minute of such intention was made." (Rec., 13.)

In view of the fact that the decision of this case turns upon the question whether a provision had been made as required by the Constitution, and that our contention is that the Supreme Court of Texas has settled the meaning of this requirement, the objection recited by paragraph six of the demurrer becomes immaterial.

Upon a review of these several alleged causes of demurrer, it is apparent that the real question presented to the Circuit Court, and the sole question argued and determined in the Circuit Court of Appeals, was the meaning of the constitutional requirement to make provision for levying and collecting a sufficient tax for the interest and sinking fund necessary to pay these bonds. The only objection urged by the County was that its officers, to wit, the Commissioners' Court, had neglected their duty, and not made the provision required by the Constitution; and therefore that the bonds were illegally issued; and a purchaser in open market must be held to have taken notice of this defect.

It remains for the Court to deal with this single question. We have said that the true interpretation of the clause of the Constitution of Texas in question has been fixed by a decision of the Supreme Court of Texas, rendered six months later than the decision of the Circuit Court of Appeals. The Supreme Court of Texas having decided the precise question, the conclusion reached by the Circuit Court of Appeals is necessarily erroneous.

## POINTS OF LAW.

## I.

*The Supreme Court of Texas, being the highest Court in the State, has decided the precise point upon which this case went off in the Circuit Court of Appeals.*

The Supreme Court of Texas, in a carefully prepared opinion, has declared that the true construction of this requirement of the constitution is, that the provision with regard to levying a tax is met by the Legislature passing the acts authorizing cities and counties to build bridges and issue bonds therefor.

In the Mitchel County case it appears that bridge bonds had been issued by the County, by virtue of the statute, Chapter 18, General Laws of 1884. The sections of that statute pertinent to the issue of bonds are in terms identical with that of Chapter 141, General Laws of 1887, under which Travis County issued the bonds in suit.

The taxable values of Travis County during the years in question were sufficient to admit of the levy required by law for payment of interest and the creation of a sinking fund. This fact appears from the allegations of the fifth paragraph of the petition, and must be treated as admitted by the demurrer (Rec., 6).

The Mitchel County decision settles the law. The Court says :

"If the terms of the law are such that when the County has issued its bonds in compliance with it, the bondholder might resort to a court and by mandamus compel the county to levy a tax sufficient to pay the interest annually and to raise a sinking fund of not less than two per cent., then the provision would be sufficient under the Constitution."

The Supreme Court of Texas in reaching this conclusion *does not find it necessary to over-rule a previous decision.*

It thus would seem that the District Judge, MAXEY, who speaks for the Circuit Court of Appeals, in *Brazoria County v. Youngstown Bridge Company* (80 Fed. Rep., 10), an opinion cited and relied on in the opinion of the Circuit Court of Appeals (Rec., 20), is hardly sustained when he says, "This question has been repeatedly before the Courts of Texas and the same construction has been invariably placed upon the constitutional provisions," citing therefor *City of Terrell v. Dessaint*, 71 Texas, 773, and other cases, some of them of the Supreme Court of Texas.

In the Mitchel County case the County contended that the provision for levying and collecting taxes should have been made at the time the debt was incurred; and that the debt was incurred at the time of entering into the contract for the building of the bridge. Precisely this defense is set up in the present case; but the Supreme Court of Texas in unmistakeable terms decides that the levying of a tax is a ministerial duty, and that so long as the legislature has provided by law that such shall be the duty of the County Court, neglect or failure on their part to proceed to make the levy, or to enter upon their record an order to that effect, is not such a neglect to make provision as is contemplated by the language of the Constitution.

In the case at bar, the opinion of the Court below (NEWMAN, D. J.), Rec., pp. 18-20, will be seen to be largely taken up with the statement of the condition of the parties, and with the views of the court to the effect that section 7, Article 11, of the Constitution of Texas applies to all counties and cities of the State. The decision is rested upon the previous decision of *Brazoria County v. Youngstown Bridge Company* (just cited), reported 80 Fed. Rep., 10. That the Court below fell into error in holding that the Supreme Court of Texas was of opinion that such section 7 applied to the case of a County issuing bridge bonds, is apparent from the fact that in the Mitchel County case

the Court declined to decide the point but treated it as an open question.

The learned judge cites *Nolan v. State*, 83 Texas, 182, as an authority for the position that this prohibition of the Constitution applies to all the counties of the State. It will be seen upon examining this case that it is decided upon the ground that the amount of bonds issued had exceeded the amount authorized by the enabling act, as construed in connection with sect. 9, art. 8, of the Constitution. We may reiterate the statement of our main brief that no decision of the highest court in Texas has yet been made affirmatively holding that the requirement of section 7, article 11, of the Constitution applies to the issue of bridge bonds by Counties.

Such being the fact, we submit that the plain language of the section restricts it to "such works" viz: "seawalls, breakwaters or sanitary purposes" as are erected by counties or cities bordering on the coast of the Gulf of Mexico—a position taken by the Attorney General, and other counsel for the State of Texas, in their brief filed by leave of Court in the Mitchel County case.

Should it become necessary to examine critically the cases that have been cited in these opinions and others upon which the federal judges appear to have relied, it will be found to be a mistaken inference that the question now settled by the Mitchel County decision was considered in any one of these cases; and it will further appear to have been a mistake to assume that the Supreme Court of the State of Texas has ever gone so far as to apply the requirement of section 7, article 11, of the Constitution to any case where a County has been authorized by general law to incur a debt and issue bonds therefor.

## II.

*This Court will follow the construction of the State Constitution given to it by the Supreme Court of Texas.*

It is a settled rule of this Court that the construction of a State constitution by the highest court of a State fixes the interpretation that will be followed by this Court.

"We recognize the importance of the rule *stare decisis*. We recognize also the other rule that this court will follow the decisions of a State court giving a construction to their constitution and laws, and more especially when those decisions have become rules of property in the States, and when contracts must have been made, or purchases in reliance upon them. And it has been held that this Court will abandon its former decision construing a State statute, if the State Courts have subsequently given to it a different construction. \* \* \* \* With much more reason may we change our decision construing a State Constitution when no rights have been acquired under it, and when it is made to appear that before the decision is made the highest tribunal of the State had interpreted the Constitution differently, when that interpretation within the State fixed a rule of property, and has never been abandoned. In such a case we think it our duty to follow the State courts, and adopt as a true construction that which those courts have declared." Per STRONG, J., *Fairfield v. County of Gallatin*, 100 U. S., 54-55.

This policy of the Court has never been departed from.

The justice of such a rule is conspicuously apparent in the case at bar. The defense set up by the County of Travis is at best purely technical. It in effect says, as do other cases where a similar defense has been raised, that the Commissioners' Court either neglected their official duty, or misconceived the meaning of the constitutional requirement. The Supreme Court of Texas now declares that an omission by the Commissioners' Court to order a tax levy at the very moment a debt is contracted for, to be met



by negotiating bonds, does not invalidate the bonds. The decision sustains the good name of the State of Texas, while it prevents the injustice that would attend the invalidating of a large number of bonds issued by local authorities for the building of bridges and like improvements.

The Circuit Court of Appeals, it seems, fell into error in supposing that the Constitution of Texas had been construed by the highest court of the State as requiring the official action of the County Court to levy a tax at the time it sought to create a debt.

The authorities cited by counsel for the respondent, beginning with 1 Wall., 175, are not in point, for the obvious reason that the Court is in those cases treating of the effect of a reversal by a State Supreme Court of a former decision. No question of "retroactive effect" is here involved.

### III.

To reply more specifically to the brief filed on behalf of Travis County, we continue as follows :

The first and main contention on behalf of respondent is that the judgment in this case should be affirmed, because at the time that judgment was rendered it was in accordance with the construction given the Constitution and laws of the State of Texas by the Supreme Court of that State. This contention admits of two answers : It is not correct in point of fact ; and, if true, it affords no reason for the affirmance of the judgment of which petitioner complains.

Nor is it true, as respondent asserts, that in the Mitchel County case the Supreme Court of Texas gave to the Constitution and laws of Texas a construction different from that announced in the previous decisions of that State. What was decided in the Mitchel County case was that, assuming section 7 of article 11 of the Constitution to be applicable to counties not bordering on the Gulf coast, then, considering section 2 of article 11 of the Constitution,

which provided that "the construction of jails, court-houses and bridges, and the establishing of county poor houses and farms, and the laying out, construction and repairing of county roads, shall be provided for by general laws," it was in the power of the legislature to make for counties the provision for sufficient tax, etc., required by section 7, and that an act of the legislature which, like chapter 141 of the acts of 1887, authorized the issuance of bonds in payment for county bridges, and provided that the Commissioners' Court should levy a certain annual tax sufficient to pay the interest and provide a sinking fund for the redemption of said bonds, constituted such a "provision" for a sufficient tax, as fully met the requirements of the constitutional provision in question, and rendered unnecessary to the validity of the bonds authorized by the act, that the Commissioners' Court should make any provision for levying a tax at the time of making the contract or issuing the bonds.

In our original brief we asserted that no decision of the Supreme Court of Texas could be found announcing a different doctrine from that laid down in the Mitchel County case. An examination of the cases cited by respondent on p. 4 of its brief fully justifies this assertion. In not one of these cases was the Supreme Court of Texas called upon to determine the effect of a legislative provision for the levying of a sufficient tax, etc. In none of the cases was the indebtedness or bonds, the validity of which was in question, authorized by an act of the legislature which itself made provision for the laying of a sufficient tax to pay interest and provide a sinking fund.

Hence, when the Circuit Court of the United States, which rendered the original judgment in this case, considered it was following the settled jurisprudence of the Supreme Court of Texas, it simply misunderstood the previous decisions of that court, and failed to observe the fundamental distinction between the case before it, and the cases which had been before the Supreme Court of the

State, namely, that in the case before it there was a general act of the legislature, enacted under express constitutional authority, which itself made such provision for a tax for interest and sinking fund for all bonds authorized therein as to render an express or contemporaneous provision for a tax by the Commissioners' Court entirely unnecessary.

But if the fact were otherwise, and it were true that the Circuit Court of Appeals decided the case according to what was the tendency or trend of the State decisions, does it follow that this Court should not now adopt and follow the actual construction finally placed by the Supreme Court of the State upon the Constitution and laws in question? The contention under discussion might have been urged as a reason, a very weak one, why in the first instance the petition for a writ of certiorari should have been rejected; but now that the writ has been issued, respondent must go further and show that the Court of Appeals was right, and the Supreme Court of the State wrong, in the construction respectively given by them to the laws of the State of Texas; and further that this is not a proper case for the application of the rule under which the federal courts follow the decision of the State courts in the construction of State Constitutions and statutes. An argument which proceeds upon the theory that, without deciding whether the Supreme Court of the State or the United States Court of Appeals was right, and notwithstanding the rule of comity above referred to, this Court should uphold the views of the Court of Appeals, because the latter was misled by inconsistent or uncertain decisions of the State Courts, is not of sufficient weight to call for further notice.

If petitioner be otherwise entitled to the relief he now seeks, his right to a reversal of the judgment, which has erroneously pronounced against the validity of his coupons, should not be affected by anything which occurred in a suit between Travis County and the King Iron Bridge and Manufacturing Company—a litigation to which this peti-

tioner is an entire stranger, and the existence and nature of which is not disclosed by anything in this record. If respondent considered that the judgment in that case afforded any defense to the suit of Albert Wade, the matter should have been presented by special plea in the Court below. No doubt both Travis County and the King Iron Bridge and Manufacturing Company were satisfied with the judgment of the United States Circuit Court, and hence neither appealed therefrom. The Bridge Company and its surety were relieved of responsibility for alleged defective construction of a portion of the bridge, and Travis County was relieved, or thought itself relieved, of its obligation upon the bonds issued in payment for the bridge.

Each party obtained its fancied relief at the expense of the holders of the bonds, who were not parties to the suit. Doubtless both were willing to sacrifice the bondholders. The trouble is, the latter were not willing to be sacrificed. Petitioner, Albert Wade, a bona fide holder for value of the bonds or coupons, brought suit, and the defendant, Travis County, saw fit to rest its defense upon what it considered a fatal omission on the part of the County Commissioners' Court. If the Circuit Court committed an error in sustaining this defense, the fact that it committed a similar error in an unappealed case, between other parties, certainly cannot affect petitioner's right to have the error in his case corrected.

Another reason urged by respondent against petitioner's being accorded the relief he seeks is, because "it appears that counsel raised no question as to provision being made for interest and sinking fund under the general law." (P. 8 of respondent's brief.)

If by this is meant that counsel for petitioner did not in the Circuit Court, and in the Court of Appeals, urge the legislative provision as a sufficient compliance with the constitutional mandate, we answer that the correctness of the statement is by no means admitted by petitioner. He

is otherwise informed by the local counsel who represented him at Austin. If it is meant that the failure of plaintiff in the court below to plead expressly the general act of the legislature, authorizing the issuance of his bonds, or to allege expressly that his bonds had been issued in accordance with the laws of the State of Texas, prevents him from urging the provisions of the general act of 1887 in support of the validity of the bonds attacked by respondent—we answer that it is not necessary to plead a general statute, or to allege a mere conclusion of law. The court takes judicial cognizance of general laws, and draws its own conclusions of law. The petitioner did all that could be required of him when he alleged in his petition the *facts* which showed that the bonds in question were authorized by the act of 1887. When, admitting these facts, respondent demurred, on the ground that petitioner had failed to allege that, at the time the bonds were issued, any provision was made for the interest and sinking fund, it was perfectly competent for petitioner to point to the act of 1887, and to urge, as a matter of law, that the legislative provision for interest and sinking fund was sufficient. The general act of 1887, of which the court takes judicial cognizance, always opposed an insuperable barrier to respondent's contention that a contemporaneous provision by the Commissioners' Court for interest and sinking fund was essential to the validity of the bonds in question.

Finally it is contended by respondent that the doctrine announced in the Mitchel County case is not sound, and should not, for this reason, be followed by this Court. This branch of the case has been sufficiently discussed in our original brief. If your Honors deem it proper, in connection with this case, to look at the petition for a writ of *certiorari* filed in this Court 13 April, 1899, by this respondent and signed by its present counsel, you will find an emphatic declaration in favor of the correctness of the Mitchel County case. In article xii of that petition,

referring to a judgment of the Circuit Court which is said to have construed the laws of Texas in the same way as the judgment of the Circuit Court of which we complain, the present respondent, through its present counsel, say to this Court, "That it will clearly appear from a reading of the opinion of the Texas Supreme Court in the said Mitchel County case that the judgment of the said Circuit Court, rendered out of deference to the rulings of the highest court of the State, is manifestly erroneous." Respondent's confidence in the argument it presents against the relief petitioner seeks, is shown by the statement made in article ix of its petition for a writ of *certiorari*, where it says "that said cause of *Albert Wade v. Travis County*, No. 267, is now pending in this Honorable Court upon writ of *certiorari* and, because of the decision in said Mitchel County case, will most likely be reversed and remanded."

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